



2010 - 2014

Parks and Recreation Master Plan



 **The Arsh Group Inc.**
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Town of Merrillville

Department of Parks
and Recreation



**Resolution 09-39
TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE PARK AUTHORITY**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PARK AUTHORITY OF THE TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE, LAKE
COUNTY, INDIANA**

2010-2014 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

WHEREAS, the Town of Merrillville Park Authority is aware of the park and recreation needs of the residents of the Town of Merrillville; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Merrillville Park Authority is desirous of providing aesthetic and functional park and recreation facilities and programs to the residents of the Town of Merrillville to meet their physical, social, psychological and communal needs; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Merrillville Park Authority realizes the importance of sound planning in order to meet the needs of its residents; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Merrillville Park Authority is continually aware of the value and importance of leisure opportunities, recreational programs, and facilities for the future of the Town of Merrillville Park Authority and its programs, and to the residents of the Town of Merrillville;

WHEREAS, the Town of Merrillville Park Authority has retained The Arsh Group Inc. to prepare the final updated said Master Plan, which is all in the following words and figures attached;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE PARK AUTHORITY, by unanimous declaration, does adopt the Merrillville Park and Recreation Master Plan 2010 - 2014 as its official plan for growth and development of parks and recreation opportunities in Merrillville, Indiana, over the next five years. The Town of Merrillville Park Authority is committed to an annual review and update of the goals and objectives of this Master Plan.

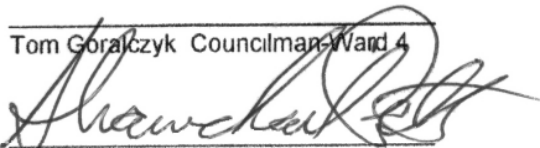
Adopted and signed the 22nd day of December Two Thousand and Nine

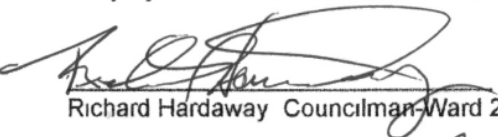
TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE PARK AUTHORITY


Joseph Shudick Jr President-Ward 5

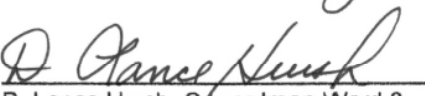
Tom Goralczyk Councilman-Ward 4

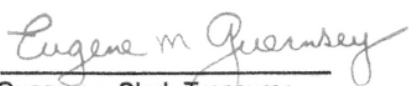
Andy Sylwestrowicz Councilman-Ward 1


Shawn Pettit Councilman-Ward 6


Richard Hardaway Councilman-Ward 2


Ron Widing Councilman-Ward 7


D Lance Huish Councilman-Ward 3

Attested 
Eugene Guernsey Clerk Treasurer

Resolution 09-40

A RESOLUTION OF THE PARK AUTHORITY OF THE TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA

Americans with Disabilities Act

WHEREAS, the Town of Merrillville Park Authority is aware of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336), and

WHEREAS, the Town of Merrillville Park Authority desires to provide the highest level of accessibility possible and feasible for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, and mental impairments, consistent with the obligation to conserve park resources and preserve the quality of the park and recreation experiences for everyone

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE PARK AUTHORITY, will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and will make every effort, including a self-evaluation of its policies and practices, to ensure all services, programs, and activities of the Department, or its contractors, will provide the highest level of accessibility possible; and

BE IT RESOLVED by the Town of Merrillville Park Authority that the Board designates the Park Superintendent to act on behalf of the Board in resolving complaints and grievances pertaining to this Act.

Adopted and signed the 22nd day of December, Two Thousand and Nine.

TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE PARK AUTHORITY

Joseph Shudick, Jr., President-Ward 5

Tom Goralczyk, Councilman-Ward 4

Andy Sylwestrowicz, Councilman-Ward 1

Shawn Pettit, Councilman-Ward 6

Richard Hardaway, Councilman-Ward 2

Ron Widing Councilman-Ward 7

D. Lance Huish, Councilman-Ward 3

Attested Eugene M. Guernsey
Eugene Guernsey, Clerk-Treasurer

**US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
ASSURANCE OF COMPLIANCE
(TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964)**

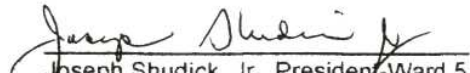
The Town of Merrillville Park Authority, hereinafter called the "Applicant-Recipient" HEREBY AGREES THAT IT will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352) and all requirements imposed by or pursuant to the Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR 17) issued pursuant to that title, to the end that, in accordance with Title VI of that Act and the Regulation, no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the Applicant-Recipient receives financial assistance from the National Park Service and hereby gives assurance that it will immediately take any measure to effectuate this agreement.

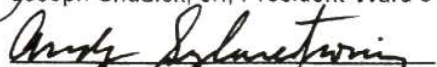
If any real property or structure thereon is provided or improved with the aid of Federal financial assistance extended to the Applicant-Recipient by the National Park Service, this assurance obligates the Applicant-Recipient, or in the case of any transfer of such property, any transferee for the period during which the real property or structure is used for a purpose involving the provisions of similar services or benefits. If any personal property is so provided, this assurance obligates the Applicant-Recipient for the period during which it retains ownership or possession of the property. In all other cases, this assurance obligates the Applicant-Recipient for the period during which the Federal financial assistance is extended to it by the National Park Service.

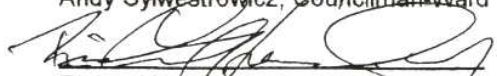
THIS ASSURANCE is given in consideration of and for the purpose of obtaining any and all Federal grants, loans, contracts, property discounts, or other Federal financial assistance extended after the date hereof to the Applicant-Recipient by the bureau or office, including installment payments after such date on account of arrangements for Federal financial assistance which were approved before such date. The Applicant-Recipient recognizes and agrees that such Federal financial assistance will be extended in reliance on the representations and agreements made in this assurance, and that the United States shall reserve the right to seek judicial enforcement of this assurance. This assurance is binding on the Applicant-Recipient, its successor, transferees, and assignees, and the person or persons whose signatures appear below are authorized to sign this assurance on behalf on the Applicant-Recipient.

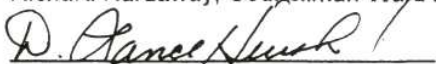
THE APPLICANT-RECIPIENT ALSO AGREES to comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and all requirements imposed by or pursuant to the Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR 17) issued pursuant to these titles, to the end that, no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of age or handicap be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the Applicant-Recipient receives financial assistance from the National Park Service and hereby gives assurance that it will immediately take any measures to effectuate this agreement.

TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE PARK AUTHORITY

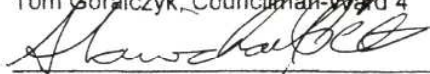

Joseph Shudick, Jr., President-Ward 5

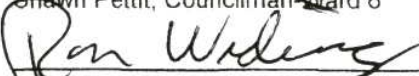

Andy Sylwestrowicz, Councilman-Ward 1

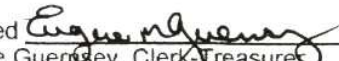

Richard Hardaway, Councilman-Ward 2


D. Lance Huish, Councilman-Ward 3


Tom Goralczyk, Councilman-Ward 4


Shawn Pettit, Councilman-Ward 6


Ron Widing, Councilman-Ward 7

Attested 
Eugene Guernsey, Clerk-Treasurer

REQUEST FOR ELIGIBILITY

Land and Water Conservation Fund

We hereby request eligibility to participate in the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program administered by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE PARK AUTHORITY

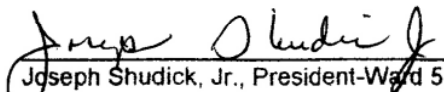
5750 Tyler Place
Merrillville, Indiana 46410
Telephone: (219) 980-5911
FAX: (219) 980-0928

The Town of Merrillville Park Authority was established under the provisions of Section 201, Chapter 311, Article II of the Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Indiana for 1965. In 1986, the Merrillville Parks and Recreation Department was re-established under the current provisions of Indiana Code 36-10. This Act empowers the Board to plan, construct, operate, and maintain recreation and park facilities.

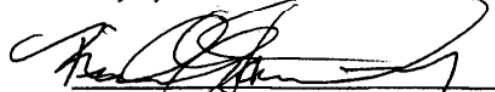
By virtue of the powers vested in our Board by the Indiana General Assembly we agree, if approved, to abide by all applicable State and Federal Laws and the provisions outlined in the Guidelines for Local Agencies participating in the Land and Water Conservation Program.

Adopted and signed the 22ND day of DECEMBER, Two Thousand and Nine.

TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE PARK AUTHORITY

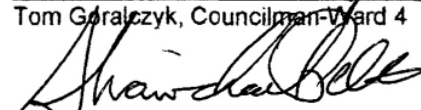

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Andy Sylwestrowicz, Councilman-Ward 1

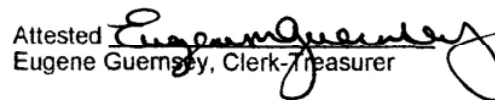

Richard Hardaway, Councilman-Ward 2


D. Lance Huish, Councilman-Ward 3


Tom Goralczyk, Councilman-Ward 4


Shawn Pettit, Councilman-Ward 6


Ron Widing Councilman-Ward 7

Attested 
Eugene Guernsey, Clerk-Treasurer

2010-2014 PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN-UPDATE

January 2010

Town of Merrillville

Department of Parks and Recreation

PARK COMMITTEE

D. Lance Huish	Chairman
Shawn Pettit	Member
Ron Widing	Member

Terri Monroe Weems	Director
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Howard Fink	Town Administrator
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MERRILLVILLE TOWN COUNCIL

Joseph Shudick, Jr., President	Ward 5
Andy Sylwestrowicz	Ward 1
Richard Hardaway	Ward 2
D. Lance Huish	Ward 3
Tom Goralczyk	Ward 4
Shawn Pettit	Ward 6
Ron Widing	Ward 7

Eugene Guernsey	Clerk - Treasurer
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This document was prepared by the Arsh Group Inc., Planners, Landscape Architects, Development Consultants, Merrillville, Indiana 46410, under a contract for the Town of Merrillville, Parks and Recreation Authority.

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter One

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, the traditional functions of parks and recreation have changed. Family and community social activities have moved inside, while outdoor sports activity has declined. Parks as gathering places for family and neighbors to play sports, exercise and extended family activities have also shifted. Neighborhood parks and recreation facilities were used for weddings, baby showers, family reunions and other ceremonies. Many of the rental functions are now taking place in expanded church facilities and banquet halls.

The most common neighborhood park function is tied to play activity for children. Children playing on the playgrounds, adults enjoying a book on a bench, and the family dog running free are common activities. Today, larger community parks provide a wider variety of facilities to accommodate daily walks or runs, picnic areas for family cookouts, and sports fields. Desired amenities include creative aesthetic features of flowers, benches and water elements like fountains and ponds. Sustainable parks have also become a necessity as the demand for resources increases. Community centers that feature spaces for daily activities and programs that organize these activities are seen as essential in the community as a safe gathering place for children and adults of all ages.

1. Background

The Town of Merrillville's 2005-2009 Plan established a new course for the Town as a growing community to meet its residents' parks and recreational needs. The parks and recreational conditions in the Town have improved significantly since the adoption of the 2005 Plan. The economic climate has also changed as a result of recent downturn. The resulting loss of tax revenue has impacted investment for many parks, recreational programs, and facilities. Additionally, the State of

Indiana enacted legislation that capped property tax revenue for commercial and residential properties. This legislation has resulted in the loss of property tax and difficulties in collection. Both of these have also contributed to the pressures in reduction of programs, services, or totally delaying implementation of facility development and expansion.

2. Plan Update Objective and Process

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is Merrillville's official policy guide for parks and recreation acquisition and development. It considers not only the immediate needs and concerns of the community, but also the projected needs of the community on an annual basis.

The Town of Merrillville retained The Arsh Group, Inc. as the consultant for the Plan Update. The Arsh Group's involvement was to review, and prepare specific elements of the Plan Update and the final report. Merrillville Parks and Recreation Director played a major role in advising during the Plan development process. Tasks performed in the development of this Plan included:

- Update and analyze social and economic data
- Update department accomplishments
- Review of the citizen comments
- Facilitation of one public meeting
- Completion of the final Report

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Chapter Two

II. COMMUNITY PROFILE

1. Location

The Town of Merrillville is located in the northwest corner of Indiana in Lake County (see Map 1). The Town shares borders with several municipalities, including Schererville, Gary, Griffith, Crown Point, Winfield, and Hobart. Merrillville lies 30 miles to the southeast of Chicago and 140 miles northwest of Indianapolis. Interstate 65 traverses the Town in a north-south direction and connects Merrillville with Indianapolis to the south and the I-80/94 corridor to the north. U.S. 30, Lincoln Highway, crosses the Town in an east-west direction and connects the town to adjoining communities.

2. History

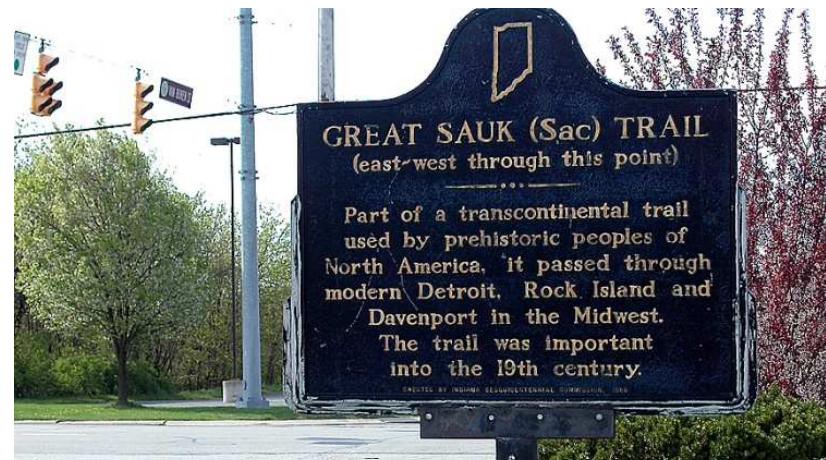
The Town of Merrillville was once a populated and heavily forested area inhabited by the Potawatomie Indians. The Potawatomie were native to the land and were hunters and fishermen. Before 1837, the area known as Lake County belonged to 19 Potawatomie chiefs and ten white men. Early settlers found the northern part of Lake County to be dunes, marshland, and brush. They found the southern part of the county to be river marshes along the river and suitable for farming.

Other settlers came into the region by way of 16 trails to an area called Wiggins' Point. The major trail was the Sauk Trail, and development started on the edges of that area. Portions of this trail still exist as today's 73rd Avenue. In 1835, a white trader named Jeremiah Wiggins arrived at McGwinn's Village. Wiggin's familiarity with the language of the Potawatomie made it easy for him to begin trade with the natives. Settlement expanded after the federal government revoked the Potawatomie claim to the land in 1833. The

Indians from this area became part of the larger forced resettlement in the West.



Lincoln Highway - 1925



Sauk Trail - 73rd Avenue and Van Buren Street

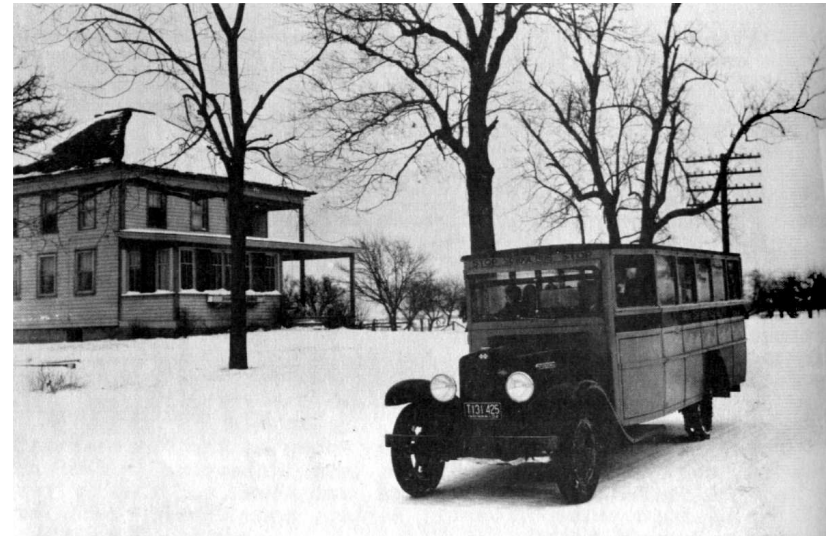
Merrillville is located in Ross Township, named after one of the early settlers, William Ross. Ross was one of the first white settlers in the area who made a home in the Deep River area in 1833. Since this area was near the center of the 16 trails, residents suggested the name of Centerville for the town developing there. It wasn't officially Centerville until the first post office opened in 1844. Two of the settlers who came to the area shortly after Wiggins' death were the Merrill brothers, Dudley and William. They farmed the area next to the Wiggins' property, which was then owned by the Saxton family. The first commercial building was a hotel for travelers. Dudley Merrill became the proprietor of the hotel years later. Other buildings including a general store and a blacksmith's shop were soon built near the hotel.



Old Mill- 1930- 73rd Avenue & Madison Street

Dudley Merrill opened a cheese factory, ran the hotel for a time, and continued farming in the town. Both Merrill brothers had a significant influence on the development of the town. This influence is

recognized when in 1948, the residents changed the name once again to Merrillville. By the early 1900's, expanded development throughout Lake County transformed the Indian trails of 1835 into major transportation thoroughfares that run through Merrillville: 73rd Avenue (Old Lincoln Highway), Highway 30, and Interstate 65 linking northern Lake County to the south.



(William) Merrill-Pierce Home - 1932

Merrillville officially became a town in 1971 by incorporating most of Ross Township. Parts of Ross Township however, remain the neighboring cities Hobart and Crown Point. The Town's boundaries are from 53rd Avenue in the North to 101st Avenue in the South and from Whitcomb Street in the West to County Line Road to the East. Merrillville covers 31 square miles of land. The area is characterized by gentle rolling topography of well drained fertile soil that is well suited for farming. Merrillville also has a series of tributaries that drain into Turkey Creek and Deep River.



Former landscaped island with Jeremiah Wiggins marker (Broadway & 73rd)



New Office-Retail



Hotel and Entertainment

The Town has continued to grow rapidly since its naming day over 165 years ago to become the town we see today. By 2008 the population grew to over 31,500. Population projections estimate continued increases in population to over 38,000 by 2020. The Town has evolved into a diverse and cultural community with rich business districts that support the residents and regional shoppers. Daytime trips, due to shoppers, restaurants and the business engagements increase the

population of Merrillville to over 100,000 according to most recent estimates. Merrillville's primary transportation routes are U.S. 30 and I-65. U.S. 30 serves as the crossroads of the county and the region and runs through most of the Town.

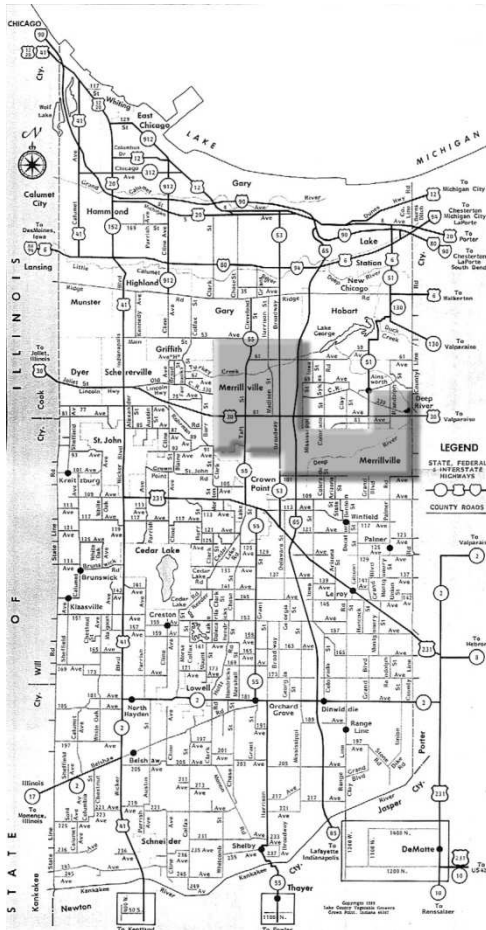
3. Natural Features

Several natural features contributed to the area's popularity during the settlement period. Area climate, soil composition, vegetation, the quality and expanse of both surface and groundwater were all primary factors influencing growth and development of the Town. The following sections describe different natural elements in the Town of Merrillville.

Vegetation

The Town of Merrillville is located where upland and lowland areas of Lake County meet. These areas are typified by prairie and forest in the uplands and extensive wetlands in the lowlands. Various species of hardwoods such as several types of oak, butternut, and maple exist throughout the area.

Wetlands/Water Resources



Map 1 - Lake County Regional Map

Merrillville is in the Little Calumet River Watershed. Two major streams are found within the Town: Turkey Creek and Deep River. Turkey Creek is approximately 11 miles long and flows generally eastward, emptying into Deep River. Deep River is a tributary of the Little Calumet River. It begins west of Crown Point and travels northeastward through Merrillville and Hobart, forming Lake George in Hobart, and eventually emptying into Lake Michigan.

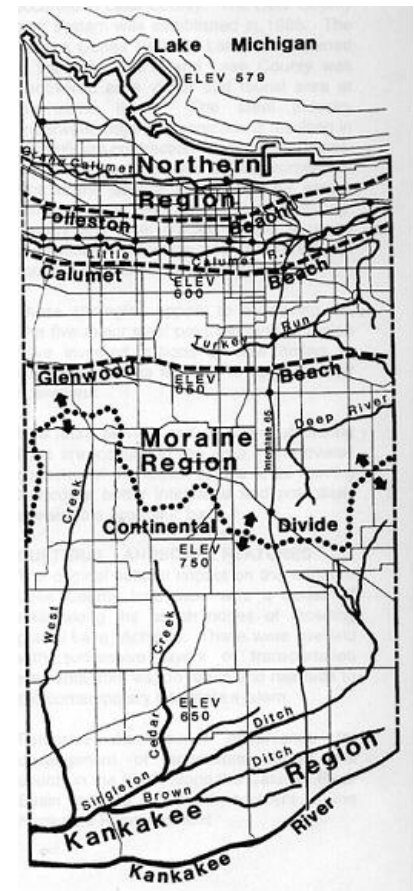
Wetlands are found throughout the Town, but are particularly concentrated around the area's rivers and streams.

The largest wetland complex occurs in the lowland areas in the northwest corner of the Town. The eastern "panhandle" area also has significant wetland presence. The wetland areas support a variety of flora and fauna and contribute significantly to the preservation of water quality and the reduction of floods.

Soils

Soil classifications (made up of a mixture of basic soil types) have been identified and mapped by the Soil Conservation Service in the Soil Survey of Lake County, Indiana. There are five different soil associations within the Town. Each of these associations has its own unique characteristics, including limitations for development, recreation, and agriculture. Three of these are:

- In the North, there is the Alida-Del Ray-Whitaker Association
- In the East and again in the West, there is the Morley-Blount-Pewamo association:
- In the Center, there is the Elliott-Markham-Pewamo association



Map 2 - Lake County Physiographic Map

These soils are best used for crops of corn and soybeans, pasture land, and trees. The seasonally high water table and ponding in the level soils makes drainage a problem and limits engineering development for roads and business districts.

4. Land Use and Trends

The Town of Merrillville has an area of approximately 20,980 acres. The land use pattern in the Town ranges from agricultural, single-family residential homes, and open space areas, to commercial and office uses. According to the Comprehensive Plan data, Agriculture remains one of the dominant land uses in Merrillville. According to this Plan, Agriculture accounts for more than 45 percent of the total land area. Agricultural uses are concentrated primarily in the “panhandle” area, with other agricultural areas located in the northwest and southwest parts of Town.

The second dominant land use in the Town is single-family residential, which covers over 20 percent of the total land area. The majority of the single-family homes in Merrillville are located in the north and central sections. This segment continues to expand and is covering more areas south of US 30. The Town is adding multi-family residential uses also. Two new developments, in the southern part of the Town, have added several hundred new rental housing units in the Town.

Commercial uses are primarily located along the major arterials, covering more than 5 percent of land in the Town. The remainder of the land consists of vacant land, open space or forested areas. Table 1 shows different land uses in the Town in 1998 as reported in the Town Comprehensive Plan. The Town has not updated the Comprehensive Plan. As such, new information for land use is not available.

Table 1 – Land Use

Land Use	Area (acres)	% land use
Single Family Residential	3,831.8	19.4%
Multi-Family Residential	231.3	1.2%
Commercial/Office	1,133.9	5.8%
Public	317.8	1.6%
Industrial	252.8	1.3%
Agricultural	8,884.5	45.1%
Public & Private Recreation	688.2	3.5%
Undeveloped Land (vacant & open space)	3,880.4	19.7%

Source: Harland Bartholomew & Associates

Sensitive Sites

The State’s 2000 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan has inventoried the sensitive sites in the Town. Accordingly, the following areas have been identified:

- Deep River Marsh
- Deep River Woods
- Oak Ridge Prairie West

5. Community Facilities

The Town of Merrillville is governed by a Town Council form of government. The Town has seven council districts with one representative from each district. The Town relies primarily on property taxes, state taxes, user fees, and federal grants as revenues for its operation. The 2008 total tax rate was \$3.59 for Merrillville. The total certified assessed valuation for the Town for 2007 payable in 2008 was reported to be \$1,951,308,167.

The changes in tax structure have created major difficulties for many communities including Merrillville. The more recent economic

downturn has exacerbated this condition to the levels that Merrillville has had to resort to severe budget cuts despite its relatively healthy tax base. In turn, the Parks Department has had to rethink its programs and reduce its overall operation.

Fire Protection

Ross Township Volunteer Fire Department is responsible for fire protection in Merrillville. The department is fully operated by volunteers. In 2009, the Department had approximately 130 volunteers. There are four Fire Stations in the Town. These Stations are located at 7905 Taft, 850 W. 57th, 18 W. 73rd and 9200 E. Old Lincoln Highway.

Parks and Recreation

The Merrillville Parks and Recreation Department administers all parks and recreation activities and programs within the Town. Currently, the Town has over 100 acres of park land ranging in size from 1/4 acre to 49 acres. Recreation programs have been stressed in the past, but the lack of funding and facilities has limited the development of robust recreation programs.

There are also several other recreation facilities in the Town that offer a variety of programs to residents. Ross Township has four facilities; Hidden Lake Park, Ross Swimming Pool, Skinner Park, and Independence Park. The Township also owns several other smaller parcels in town, but they are all undeveloped. Lake County Parks Department owns and operates Turkey Creek Golf Course, Oak Ridge Prairie, and Deep River Park & Deep River Water Park. In addition, numerous private facilities exist within Merrillville. These include the regionally well-known Innsbrook Country Club.

Utilities

Sanitary sewer collection and conveyance is provided by two separate agencies, Independent Hill and Merrillville Conservancy Districts. The districts are independent agencies and are regulated by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. These agencies have a contract with the Gary Sanitary District for waste-water treatment. The districts are not subject to operations or oversight by the Town of Merrillville. Nonetheless, these utility agencies have played a major role in the growth of the Town. The waste water collected within town is delivered to the Gary Sanitary District, where it is treated.

The Indiana-America Water Company provides drinking water to most of Merrillville proper, although in less developed areas, drinking water is primarily obtained from residential wells. Several subdivisions are also provided water by the Conservancy District.

The storm water drainage consists of several systems. These include separated storm sewers, open ditches, detention/retention ponds, and combined sewer systems. In most neighborhoods, the storm water is drained into a storm water sewer system or ditch that drains into a lateral tributary like Turkey Creek or Deep River. Most platted subdivisions, streets, retail centers, churches and other developed lands have created a combination of storm water systems which often are not adequate. The Federal government recently implemented mandatory regulations for the reduction of water pollution in from stormwater runoff. The Town has recently approved new ordinances to establish a Stormwater Management District. Under this Authority, the Town has adopted the new regulation entitled Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). Under MS4, each municipality is responsible for their community and has accessed a fee tied to the property tax bill. The Town of Merrillville's fee is \$60.00 per year. The Town has levied this fee in 2009.

6. Community Profile

Population

Population growth is expected to continue, possibly at a pace slower than previous projections, according to Census reports. Over the next 10 years, it is anticipated that the population of the Town will exceed 38,000. Between 2005 and 2009, the Town of Merrillville issued 579 building permits for new housing units. Housing permits have declined significantly for the last two years due to economic conditions. The economic conditions have also contributed to the reduction in the population growth. In fact, based on the Census information, the Town of Merrillville experienced a loss in population between 2007 and 2008. As a whole, the following characteristics exist in the Town at the time of this report:

- Added 2,092 population between 2000-2007
- Lost 1,133 population between 2007-2008
- Merrillville population to increase to 38,027 over the next 10 years

Table 2 – Population Change

Year	Merrillville		Lake County		PMSA	
	Total	% Change	Total	% Change	Total	% Change
1980	27,677	-	522,965	-4.30%	642,781	-
1990	27,257	-1.52%	475,594	-9.06%	604,526	-6%
2000	30,560	12.12%	484,564	1.89%	631,362	4.40%
2007	32,652	6.85%	490,093	1.14%	697,822	10.53%
2008	31,519	-3.47%	484,590	-1.12%	n/a	n/a

Changes in population can place demands on the Town's resources and impact quality of life and preservation. The increase in population and estimated projections is also expected to impact the Town's

future land use decisions since the needs for park land will require better management of the future developments.

Lake County has experienced a reduction in population of 1.12%. According to the Census, Lake County's 2007 population was 490,093 in comparison with the 2008 total of 484,590.

Table 3 - Population Projections

Location	1990	2000	2020	% Difference	
				1990-2000	1990-2020
Merrillville	27,257	30,560	38,027	12.1%	39.5%
Hobart	21,822	25,363	44,950	16.2%	106.0%
Crown Point	17,728	19,806	37,046	11.7%	109.0%
Lake County	475,594	484,564	509,229	1.9%	7.1%

Population Characteristics

The Town of Merrillville has experienced a shift in population as the area has become more diverse in character. Table 4 shows different racial categories for the population in the Town. Ethnic groups have increased over the last seven years, representing 50% collectively.

Table 4 – Population by Race and Ethnicity

Year	Population	White	%	African American	%	Hispanic	%
1990	27,257	24,998	91.7%	1,367	5.0%	1,880	6.9%
2000	30,560	21,286	69.7%	6,987	22.9%	1,035	3.4%
2007	32,652	16,932	51.9%	13,544	41.5%	3,006	9.2%

A review of the racial characteristics for different Census Tracts for the decade between 1990 and 2000 shows a general increase in the number of the minorities. The highest concentration of minority population is observed in northern Census Tract 424 where minorities constitute more than 41% of the population in 2000.

Table 5 – Population Distribution by Tract

	Category	423		424		425		Total
1990	White	4,082	98.3%	15,205	89.0%	12,766	95.0%	24,998
	African-American	0	0.0%	1,311	7.7%	305	2.3%	1,367
	Hipanic	211	5.1%	1,237	7.2%	771	5.7%	1,880
	Total	4,154		17,091		13,438		27,257
	%							
	Minority	5.1%		14.9%		8.0%		11.9%
2000	White	4,081	93.8%	10,613	60.9%	14,140	83.7%	21,286
	African-American	88	2.0%	5,441	31.2%	2,382	14.1%	6,987
	Hipanic	271	6.2%	1,753	10.1%	1,432	8.5%	1,035
	Total	4,350		17,433		16,902		30,560
	%							
	Minority	8.3%		41.3%		22.6%		26.3%

Households

Census 2007 data for Merrillville indicates a change in households in the Town. According to the Census data from the 2007 estimate, there were a total of 12,931 households in Merrillville. This represents an increase of 10.7% compared with the Census 2000 households of 11,678. Family households represent 8,045 of the total households and non-family households are 4,886. An increase of 37.3% occurred in non-family households between 2000 and 2007.

Table 6 – Households

Households	Families	Non-Family	Female Head	Elderly	Total
1990	7,607	2,399	910	4,317	10,006
2000	8,125	3,558	1,469	1,382	11,678
2007	8,045	4,886	1,775	1,324	12,931
% Change	-1.0%	37.3%	20.8%	-4.2%	10.7%

Female-headed households increased by 306 or 20.8% between 2000 and 2007. Household size continues to decline indicating smaller families. In 2000, the household size in Merrillville was 2.57 persons. In 2007, the household size had dropped to 2.47 persons. It should be noted that the drop in household size is a national trend as the country becomes older and families become smaller.

Table 7 – Household Change

Tenure	1990	2000	2007
Average household size	2.72	2.57	2.47
Average family size	3.14	3.12	3.12

Table 8 shows the household composition by Census Tract. Within the 8,125 family households, female householders accounted for 1,469 households. In non-family households, over 85% of the population lived alone. Non-family households were almost evenly distributed in the community with between 70%-93% residing in all Tracts.

Table 8 – Female Householder

CENSUS TRACTS	FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS					NON-FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS		
	Family	Female	%	Female w/ children under age 18	%	Non-family	H.H. Lives Alone	%
423 Block 1 (Merr.)	324	31	10%	N/A	N/A	46	32	70%
424.01	1,819	431	24%	249	58%	705	581	82%
424.02	1,702	296	17%	149	50%	523	469	78%
424.03	1,140	268	24%	136	51%	523	469	78%
425.01	1,675	234	14%	129	55%	484	366	76%
425.02	2,137	257	12%	129	50%	1,143	992	87%
425.03	642	81	13%	36	44%	369	342	93%
423 Block 2 (Ross T.)	931	94	10%	N/A	N/A	248	203	82%
Merrillville Total	8,125	1,469	18%	777	53%	3,358	3,052	86%

Income

According to available data from the Census Bureau, family and household incomes have changed over the past seven years. In general, income in the Town has either been stagnant or experienced some decline. The Median Family Income increased by 1.20% from \$56,355 in 2000 to \$57,032 in 2007. Median Household Income however has declined by 7.6% or a loss of \$3,769.00. Table 9 compares income changes for Merrillville and Lake County during the reported period.

Table 9 – Median Income

Area	Family			Household		
	2000	2007	% Change	2000	2007	% Change
Merrillville	\$56,355	\$57,032	1.20%	\$49,545	\$45,776	-7.61%
Lake County	\$50,131	\$57,322	14.34%	\$41,829	\$47,650	13.92%

The average Median Family Income (MFI) by Census Tract in Merrillville is \$73,227. The Federal Financial Institution Examination Council (FFIEC) 2009 report shows the highest MFI in Tract 425.03, Block 1. The percentage of low-moderate income families in Tract 423.03, Block 1 is 26.8%. Census Tract 423, Blocks 1 and 2 have the lowest concentration of low-moderate income families.

Table 10 – Income by Tract/Block

TRACT	Low-Mod Households	Low-Mod Population	% Low-Mod	2009 MFI
423 (Block 1) Merr.	150	1,102	13.6%	\$78,580
424.01 (Block 1)	459	1,722	26.7%	\$65,519
424.01 (Block 2)	1,201	2,670	45.0%	
424.01 (Block 3)	1,010	2,249	44.9%	
424.02 (Block 1)	248	1,124	22.1%	\$67,299
424.02 (Block 2)	1,744	4,358	40.0%	
424.02 (Block 3)	348	888	39.2%	
424.03 (Block 1)	600	1,520	39.5%	\$62,036
424.03 (Block 2)	1,210	2,605	46.4%	
425.01 (Block 1)	543	1,513	35.9%	\$72,414
425.01 (Block 2)	766	2,915	26.3%	
425.01 (Block 3)	512	1,758	29.1%	
425.02 (Block 1)	405	1,401	28.9%	\$76,787
425.02 (Block 2)	329	792	41.5%	
425.02 (Block 3)	174	593	29.3%	
425.03 (Block 1)	680	2,537	26.8%	\$84,598
423 (Block 2)	18	172	11.0%	\$78,580

Source: Census/FFIEC 2009

Age

Similar to household change, there have been shifts in the age distribution in the Town between 2000 and 2007. According to the Census, the population under 25 has experienced a notable decline. Young adults, children and students, age 25 and younger, experienced a decline in every age group except age 10-14. Despite this general decline, this age group continues to represent a large number of the total population. The most notable change is observed among the population group age 55-59. This subgroup has seen an increase of 925 individuals or about 7.3%. The elderly population, age 65 and

over, during the same period has seen a modest increase of about 2.5% between 2000 and 2007.

Table 11 – Age Distribution Change

Age	2000		2007		% Change
	Number	%	Number	%	
< 5	2,021	6.61%	1,851	5.67%	-8.41%
5 to 9	2,006	6.56%	1,843	5.64%	-8.13%
10 to 14	2,120	6.94%	2,274	6.96%	7.26%
15 to 19	2,227	7.29%	2,066	6.33%	-7.23%
20 to 24	1,824	5.97%	1,701	5.21%	-6.74%
25 to 34	4,182	13.68%	5,072	15.53%	21.28%
35 to 44	4,796	15.69%	4,446	13.62%	-7.30%
45 to 54	4,183	13.69%	4,689	14.36%	12.10%
55 to 59	1,477	4.83%	2,402	7.36%	62.63%
60 to 64	1,120	3.66%	1,586	4.86%	41.61%
65 to over	4,604	15.07%	4,722	14.46%	2.56%
Total	30,560	100.0%	32,652	100.0%	6.85%

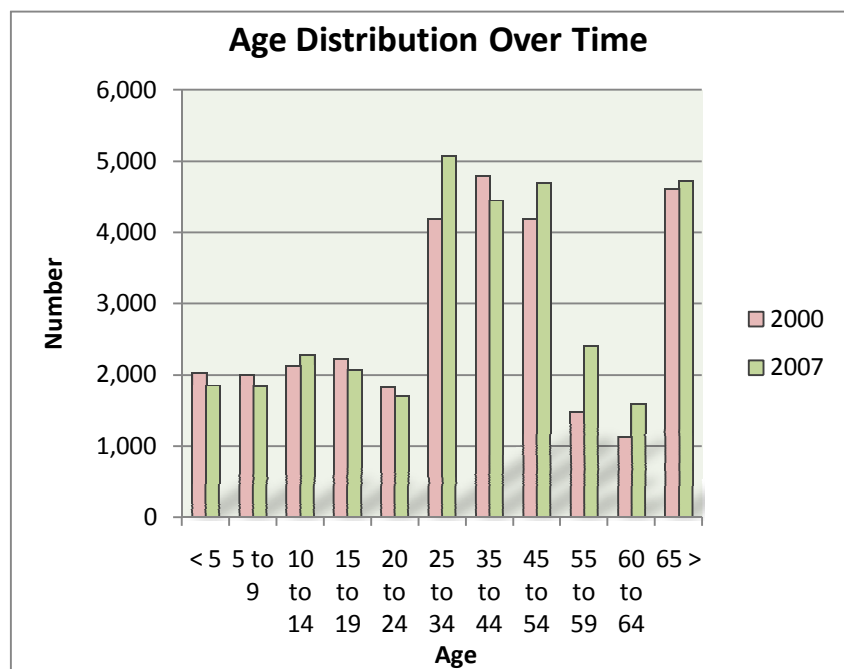


Table 12 presents the age distribution by Census Tract. According to this table, Census Tract 425.03 has the smallest number of all age groups due to its predominantly commercial character. Tract 425.03 is bounded by US 30 on the south, I-65 on the east, 73rd on the north and St. Rd. 55 on the west. The Tract next to it, but on the south side of US 30, shows the largest population of most all age groups due to its higher population in general and high residential makeup.

Table 12 – Age by Census Tract

AGE	< 5	5 - 9	10 - 19	20 - 34	35 - 54	55 - 64	65 & over
423.00	224	280	617	705	1,406	541	577
424.01	494	504	1,005	1,322	1,963	544	824
424.02	443	400	885	1,156	1,734	579	1,290
424.03	240	226	627	713	1,375	331	778
425.01	472	498	936	1,428	1,872	511	469
425.02	442	445	1,066	1,720	2,469	770	1,334
425.03	111	137	367	383	761	216	495

Note: Census Tract 423 (includes part of Hobart)

Census Tract 425.02 includes part of Crown Point

School Enrollment

Available data from the Indiana Department of Education shows school enrollment continued to increase from the 2004 school year up to 2007. The increased enrollment trend began to slow beginning in the 2007-08 school year. The last two school years have experienced a minor decline in enrollment. Enrollment experienced a net loss of 99 students from the 2006-07 to 2007-08. The following year recorded a loss of 53 students. Table 13 shows student characteristics over the past 5 years. Minority student enrollment increased more than 15% from the 2004-05 year to 2008-09. The percentage of special education students remained constant at nearly 12%.

During the 5 year study period, Merrillville School's limited English students increased annually from 92 in the 2004-05 school year to 200 by 2008-09. Graduates going on to college trended upwards from 78.6% in 2004-05 to over 83% in 2007-08. Math and English ISTEP pass scores have been below the State average annually.

Table 13 – School Enrollment Characteristics

Merrillville School Corp.	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Student	6,763	6,984	7,173	7,074	7,021
%Minority	61.2%	65.2%	70.8%	74.1%	76.9%
% of Special Ed,	12.1%	12.6%	12.9%	12.5%	12.2%
% Free Lunch	31%	38%	43%	50%	n/a
# Limited English	92	107	155	187	200
% Graduates Pursuing College Ed	78.6%	82.4%	86.6%	83.1%	n/a
ISTEP Pass (Math and English)%	57.9%	56.0%	55.5%	53.2%	55.3%
State Average					
Student	1,021,197	1,034,727	1,045,700	1,046,609	1,046,263
% Minority	21.4%	22.4%	23.4%	24.2%	24.9%
% of Special Ed,	17.7%	17.9%	17.8%	17.8%	17.5%
% Free Lunch	37%	38%	40%	45%	n/a
# Limited English	31,956	35,817	42,727	46,418	45,855
% Graduates Pursuing College Ed	74.2%	74.9%	n/a	76.1%	n/a
% ISTEP Pass (Math and English)	62.9%	64.2%	63.8%	64.8%	64.8%

Employment

The business corridors in Merrillville continued to add new businesses during the 2008-09 economic downturn and provide employment opportunities. Despite this fact, unemployment increased to 5.7% in 2008; during the same time period, the national unemployment rate was 6.1%. Merrillville continues to maintain a healthy employment environment for the local and greater Northwest-Indiana community.

Table 14 – Employment Change

Year	Town of Merrillville			
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
2000	15,975	15,652	323	2.0
2007	16,645	15,813	832	5.0
2008	16,662	15,707	955	5.7
Change 2000-2008	687	55	632	3.7

Source: Indiana Department of Workforce Development

The most recent employment data, November 2009, shows unemployment rates at 9.5%. Unemployment in the previous quarter was above 10%, with 1,691 people in Merrillville unemployed in August of 2009. A comparison of Lake County and Merrillville show that unemployment rates are nearly the same.

Table 15 – Employment Comparison

Category	Merrillville			Lake County		
	2009		2008	2009		2008
	August	July	August	August	July	August
Labor Force	16,692	16,869	16,736	227,309	230,190	229,066
Employment	15,001	15,135	15,731	204,270	206,097	214,219
Unemployment	1,691	1,734	1,005	23,039	24,039	14,847
Rate	10.1%	10.3%	6.0%	10.1%	10.5%	6.5%

Location and proximity to major highways provide opportunities for both employers and those seeking employment. The retail and service industry jobs continue to provide employment opportunities in the Town. The fastest growing job sectors in Merrillville are in educational services, healthcare and social assistance, representing 3,962 jobs.

Table 16 – Merrillville Occupations

Occupation	2007
Construction	1,071
Manufacturing	2,265
Wholesale Trade	284
Retail Trade	2,044
Transport. and Warehousing	1,149
Information	93
Finance and Insurance	828
Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services	953
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	3,962
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services	1,504
Other services, except public administration	915
Public administration	536

Disability and Accessibility Status

The Town of Merrillville operates 20 parks, 2 trails and one community building, each having a variety of facilities, amenities, and equipment. Listings of these facilities are provided in the next section. Many of the parks are old and have equipment that cannot be modified to meet current rules or standards. The Federal statutes require compliance with several provisions of three different legislations which impact operation of the parks and recreational facilities. According to these provisions, communities are required to address the needs of the “disabled”, as defined by federal rules, and assure equal opportunity for access to all citizens. The three legislations are:

1. Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA) - first federal law created to ensure access by persons with disabilities to all

facilities that were designed, built, altered, or leased using federal funds;

2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Pub. L, 93-112, as amended - extends access beyond architecture to include programs and employment.

The Department of the Interior Regulations 43 CFR 17, Subpart B requires that all recipients of federal funds must be in compliance with Section 504 including those programs and activities not receiving direct Federal aid. Federal financial assistance subject to Section 504 includes, but not limited to, the following:

- Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1964, (Pub. L. 88-578, 78 Stat. 897);
 - Title X of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, (Pub. L. 95-625), Urban Park and Recreation Recovery program;
 - Reservation of Land for Park, Playground, or Community Center (38 Stat. 727, 43 U.S.C. 569);
 - Recreation and Public Purposes Act (44 Stat. 741, as amended, 43 U.S.C. 869-869- 4);
 - Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (64 Stat. 430) as amended, 16 U.S.C.
3. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) - mandates state and local governments to remove barriers to access in facilities, programs, activities, and services. This includes providing modifications to policies, practices and procedures. The Act requires that the parks facilities and programs are “reasonably” accessible and useable by the entire population.

The U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, Recreation Access Advisory Committee published the Recommendations for Accessibility Guidelines. This report,

Recreational Facilities and Outdoor Developed Areas provides detailed guidelines for parks and recreation facilities. The guidelines are used to modify existing park facilities or to build new facilities. In 1996, the Department of Parks and Recreation completed a self evaluation for conformance with Section 504. The evaluation identified several deficiencies in the park facilities. Since then the Department has been in the process updating and improving its facilities to provide reasonable access to its facilities for all residents. At this reporting more than 50% of all facilities are considered to be fully accessible.

Disabled Population

The 2000 U.S. Census collected information about people with a variety of disabilities, including:

- Sensory disabilities involving sight or hearing
- Conditions that limit basic physical activities
- Disabilities that cause difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating
- Conditions that cause difficulty in dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home
- Disabilities that make it difficult to go outside the home
- Disabilities that inhibit a person's ability to work

Census 2000 counted 5,062 people with some type of long-lasting condition or disability. They represented 17.8 percent of the total population who were aged 5 and older in the civilian non-institutionalized population or slightly over one person in six (see Table 17). Within this population, Census 2000 found:

- About 8.1 % of the young population or about 543 individuals had some type of disability

- Among the population 21-64 years old, about 15.4% had some type of disability. Of this group, more than 63% held an employment position
- The largest group with disability is the population group 65 years and over with more than 42% having some type of disability

Table 17 – Population with Disabilities

Subject	Number	%
Population 5 to 20 years	6,711	100.0%
With a disability	543	8.1.0%
Population 21 to 64 years	17,442	100.0%
With a disability	2,694	15.4%
Percent employed	63.8	[X]
No disability	14,748	84.6%
Percent employed	80.5	[X]
Population 65 years and over	4,306	100.0%
With a disability	1,825	42.4%

Accessibility Conditions

The populations with special needs are required to be accommodated when planning for parks and leisure facilities. According to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all facilities designed and constructed after 1992 must be accessible and physical barriers in existing public facilities must be removed if “reasonably” achievable. ADA policy also addresses the following:

- Policies – compliant with ADA except for Braille copies of documents
- Employment – ADA/Rehabilitation Act compliant
- Programs – ADA compliant
- Facilities – ADA compliant except for ingress/egress to several playgrounds

- Economics – Not covered under ADA, but sliding scales for fees are in place and operating for population with special needs

The Department views physical accessibility to all parks, playgrounds, restrooms, and water fountains as a high priority; however the lack of funds has impacted the Department's ability to modify all facilities in the Departments inventory. Future improvements or modifications will meet all necessary ADA accessibility requirements.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Chapter 3

III. MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The management of Merrillville parks and recreation activities and facilities is the responsibility of the Town of Merrillville Park Authority. The Park Authority was originally organized on April 8, 1986 by The Ordinance 86-04. The Ordinance creating the Park Authority is permitted by Indiana Code, where all Town Council members serve as the Park Authority. The Town Council/Park Authority is responsible for budgeting, hiring, and security of all the park facilities.

1. Parks Authority

The Parks Authority is the managing entity for the Department of Parks and Recreation. The Authority, although a separate entity under Indiana Code, also serves a dual purpose, both as the Town Council and the Park Authority.

Membership

Although the Town Council as a whole serves as the Park Authority, the Council has established a Parks and Recreation Committee. The Committee oversees the Parks activities on a regular basis. The members of the Park Committee are appointed on an annual basis. The 2009 members of the Committee are:

Mr. D. Lance Huish, Chair
Mr. Shawn Pettit, Member
Mr. Ron Widing, Member

2. Park Authority Powers & Duties

The State enabling legislation sets out the Authority's duties and responsibilities for cities and towns. The Section 10 of the State statute (IC 36-10-5-2), as amended, sets the powers and duties of the Park Authority in the following manner:

- a. The Park Authority shall manage all public parks, including approaches that belong to the municipality.
- b. If a municipality decides, by ordinance, to establish, lay out, or improve a public park or grounds, or to make an extension of a park or grounds, it may locate the park or grounds, including appurtenances, and it may lay out and open the public ways necessary for the improvement. If it is necessary to acquire land, water rights, or easements, or a pool, lake, or natural stream of water, the Park Authority may condemn that property and take possession of it, if it is located within five (5) miles of the municipality. Before the Park Authority condemns the property, it shall assess the damages to the owners of the property at a meeting of the authority. Additional condemnation proceedings are the same as those provided for the taking of property to open streets.
- c. The Park Authority may adopt rules concerning the laying out, improvement, preservation, ornamentation, and management of parks. The Park Authority shall allow monuments or buildings for libraries, works of art, or historical collections to be erected in a park, as long as they are under the control of the persons in charge of the park, and no enclosure separates them from the rest of the park.
- d. The legislative body of the municipality may also levy a tax on all taxable property in the municipality to pay for park property and for its improvement. The legislative body may also borrow money and issue the bonds of the municipality at any rate of interest payable annually or semiannually and may sell them for at least par value. The money derived from the sale of bonds may be used only for the purchase or improvement of parks. The legislative body shall annually levy a tax sufficient to pay the interest on the debt on all taxable

property in the municipality to create a sinking fund for the liquidation of the principal of the debt.

- e. If the Park Authority of a city decides to lease any buildings or grounds belonging to the city and located in a public park when they are not required for public use, the proceeds shall be deposited with the city fiscal officer to the credit of park funds and devoted to the improvement of public parks.
- f. Any non-reverting fund that was created under IC 19-7-6 (before its repeal on September 1, 1981) continues until abolished by ordinance of the municipal legislative body. The legislative body may include, in the Park Authority's annual budget, an item and an appropriation for the specific purposes of a non-reverting capital fund. Money put in the fund may not be withdrawn except for the purposes for which the fund was created, unless the legislative body repeals the ordinance creating the fund. The repeal may not be made under suspension of the rules. Money procured from fees shall be deposited at least once each month with the municipal fiscal officer. The fiscal officer shall deposit the money either in a special non-reverting operating fund or in the non-reverting capital fund as directed by the park authority. The legislative body may provide, by ordinance, that expenditures may be made from the special non-reverting operating fund without appropriation. Money from fees procured from golf courses, swimming pools, skating rinks, or other similar facilities requiring major expenditures for management and maintenance, may not be deposited in this fund. Money from either fund shall be disbursed only on approved claims that are allowed and signed in the same manner as other claims of the municipality are allowed and signed.

As added by Acts 1981, P.L.309, SEC.112. Amended by Acts 1981, P.L.320, SEC.19; P.L.3-1990, SEC.142.

It should be noted the Park Authority, as the Town Council, will continue to have functions and duties as it has been provided by the State Code for the Town Council. As such, the Parks Department reports directly to the Merrillville Town Council through the Parks Committee and the Parks Authority.

3. Parks and Recreation Department

The Merrillville Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the development and upkeep of the Merrillville parks and approaches. The Department currently is responsible for 20 parks, 2 trails and one community facility. The Department also offers a select number of recreational programs for the residents. Many citizens use these programs to fill their leisure time or to meet their recreational needs.

Mission Statement

Strive to enhance the quality of life of Merrillville citizens by expanding availability of leisure and recreational services and promoting a clean and healthy environment.

Staffing

The key to the success of any organization is its quality of staffing. Currently, the Parks and Recreation Department has two full-time, year round employees on staff, including the Director. This represents a reduction in staff since the 2005 Plan, when there were four full-time staff members. The Department also employs 4-6 seasonal staff and summer counselors to carry out different recreational programs. The Maintenance Department has one full-time/part-time staff and

three seasonal staff. The seasonal staff works only during the growing season for the Department. The staff to park acreage ratio for the Department has remained constant of about 28.9 acres per full-time staff member. This ratio is relatively high for urbanized park departments as many smaller parks typically require more maintenance than larger, more natural parks.

The previous Parks Master Plan proposed increase of park facilities to address shortages based on national standards and to meet future needs. Current economic conditions have prevented the Town from expanding services and hiring new staff at this time. The following chart represents the organizational structure of the Department for the Merrillville Parks & Recreation Department at the time of the Plan Update. The Director has the full responsibility for the daily operation of the Department and implementation of the Master Plan, and scheduling. Staffing modifications are under consideration in 2009 as a result of budgetary constraints.

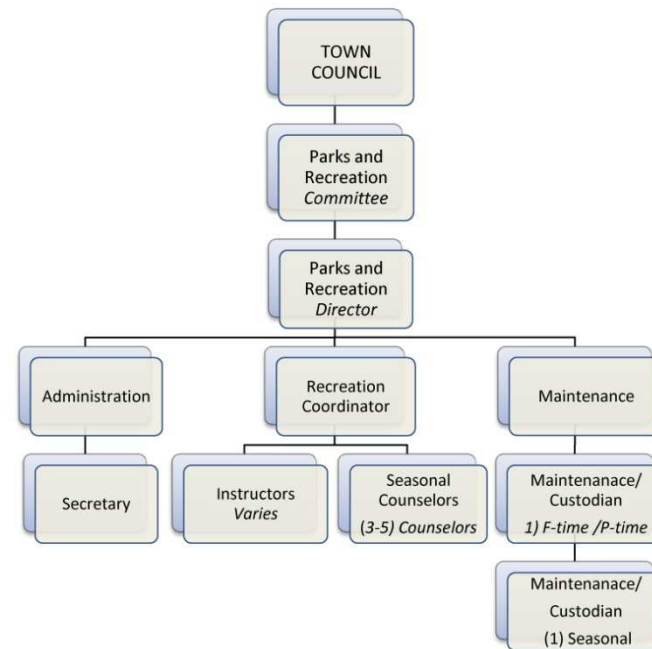


Exhibit 1 – Town of Merrillville Organizational Chart

Accomplishments

A review of the Department's activities and accomplishments show many of the tasks identified in the 2005-2009 Master Plan have been completed and implemented by the staff. The review also highlights the Department's success in obtaining outside funding. These funds have helped Parks and Recreation achieve many of its objectives. The Department has also been successful in expanding its recreational activities. In this effort the Department has established a parks and recreation fund through the Legacy Foundation for the purpose of collecting tax deductible donations. These donations have supported several park activities. The Department's accomplishments have been listed in the following Table 18.

Park Improvements (2005-2009)

The following Table 18 shows different improvements implemented in different parks for the last five years. Accordingly, the Department has

assisted in development, or improvement of parks and recreational facilities totaling more than \$1.5 million.

Table 18 – Park Improvements 2005-2009

Park	Accomplishments	Cost
Crescent Lake	Resurfaced play area with mulch	\$790
Hendricks Park	Resurfaced play area with mulch	\$790
Heroes Park	Resurfaced play area with mulch	\$790
	Park land lease agreement renewed	\$0
Jennings Park	Resurfaced play area with mulch	\$790
Kurtis Park	Resurfaced play area with mulch	\$790
Joseph Petruch, Sr. Park	Installed playground	\$20,000
	Resurfaced play area with mulch	\$790
Pruzin Park	Master Plan and plan modifications	\$33,960
	Environmental enhancements (grubbing/soil)	\$900
	Acquired new land to the west (4 lots)	\$113,900
	Recycle Tire/walk-jog trail	\$82,657
	Asphalt/Boardwalk walk-jog trail	\$324,088
	Upland Forest/ Outdoor classroom	\$31,363
	Installed butterfly garden	\$15,523
	Pruzin park/trail signage	\$703
	Containers/Benches/Tables	\$5,243
	Turkey Creek Tributary clean-up (in-kind)	\$0
	Resurfaced play area with mulch	\$790
Rosenbalm Park	Resurfaced play area with mulch	\$790
John A. Stefek Park	Constructed Trail Head (DNR)	\$52,780
	Repaired sidewalks and parking lot	\$52,000
Community Center	Site Selection Study and selection	\$13,000
Legacy Foundation	Established parks/recreation fund thru the Legacy Foundation for 501 c3 receipt of tax deductible deductions.	\$0
Trail Development	C&O Trail- Broadway to Taft completed	\$800,000
Total		\$1,552,437

Recreation Programs

The Department has received several grants for its recreation programs. The largest funding was for the Youth and Seniors in Motion programs. These programs were supported in part by a two-year health and fitness grant. The grant was funded by the Eli Lilly

Foundation through the United Ways, (Lake, LaPorte and Porter County). The grant was managed by HealthVisions Midwest. The two-year grant totaled \$100,000.

Table 19 - Recreation Programs 2005-2009

PROGRAM	Pre-School (2-4 yrs.)	Elementary (5-10 yrs.)	Mid. School (11-14)	High School (15-18)	College/ Young Adults	Adults	Families	Seniors	Fees collected	# of Days per Week	Attendance
Ballroom Dancing									\$8,709	1 day/1 session	1,537
Ballet and Tap									\$9,713	1 day/1 session	1,857
Bridge									\$0	1 day/1 session	30
Gymnastics									\$8,650	1 day/1 session	1,228
Health Screenings									\$0	Varies	158
Low-impact Aerobics									\$0	2 day/2 session	3,371
Needlecraft									\$1,269	1 day/1 session	1,341
Pinochle									\$0	1 day/1 session	2,251
Steppers Class									\$7,815	1 day/1 session	1,451
Summer Day Camp									\$81,468	5 days/ 10 wks	1,405
Trips									\$7,570	Varies	181
Walkers									\$350	3 days per wk	424
Yoga									\$4,866	3 days per wk	2,229
Youth in Motion Grant									\$62	n/a	50
Seniors in Motion Grant									\$185	n/a	137
CSRI (Cooperative Special Recreation Initiative)									\$0	1 per yaer	400
Total									\$130,657		18,050

In 2004, Merrillville Parks and Recreation partnered with local parks and recreation departments in an initiative that supports special needs children and their families. The Cooperative Special Recreation Initiative (CSRI) was comprised of the following municipalities: Merrillville, St. John, Schererville, Highland, Crown Point, Dyer, Lake County and Munster. CSRI is a cooperative venture seeking ways to increase recreational opportunities for individuals who have varying degrees of physical, mental, emotional, hearing or visual limitations and developmental delays. Each Department is responsible for hosting an event for persons with special needs along with their family. Merrillville hosts the annual Christmas party at Hidden Lake in December.

Park Equipment Replacement and Maintenance

Economic conditions and property tax restructuring has placed additional strains on the Town's budget. The result property tax caps and difficulty in collection has reduced tax revenues and operation budgets. Across the board, staff cuts were made and non-essential purchases to maintain solvency.

The quality of any park experience is influenced by the level of maintenance. The Merrillville Parks and Recreation Department managed to continue to sustain well-maintained parks during the last five years. In addition, Pruzin Park completed Phase I and Phase II construction that included a wood boardwalk, walk/jog path (part asphalt/part recycled tires), benches, directional park signage, butterfly garden, upland forest, outdoor classroom, storm water enhancement and clean-up of the section of Turkey Creek tributary that flows through the western side of Pruzin Park.

Merrillville Parks and Recreation Department employed the two maintenance staff in 2004. Budgetary constraints prompted management to reduce maintenance staff in 2008. The secretarial position was not filled and two positions in the maintenance department were combined into one full-time/part-time maintenance /custodial duties. The maintenance/custodial staff member is responsible for the maintenance of all the parks and Pruzin Park building facility in Merrillville. Seasonal staff positions range from one to three maintenance positions that are filled during the summer season.

Table 20 – Parks Equipment Replacement

ITEM DESCRIPTION	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Roto Tiller				\$2,000	
Scag Mag 72" Mower (1997)	\$8,000				
Scag Mag 72" Mower (1997)		\$8,000			
Scag Mag 72" Mower (1999)			\$8,000		
Sabretooth Tiger 72" mower			\$12,000		
GMC 4500HD 1-ton dump truck (2007)				\$50,000	
1988 4x4 half-ton Chevrolet Pick-up					\$30,000
2002 Chevrolet Impala					\$28,000
Equipment Trailer (18 feet) (repair)	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
Equipment Trailer (20 feet) (repair)	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
TOTAL	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$21,000	\$53,000	\$59,000
Total Replacement Cost	\$151,000				

Table 21 – Park Maintenance Schedule

TASKS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Spring Clean-up												
General Park Inspections												
Playground Inspections												
Playground Safety Surfacing												
Grass Mowing												
Trail Inspections												
Tree Trimming												
Exterior Painting/Staining												
Ball Diamond Maintenance												
Park Equipment Maintenance/Repair												
Equipment Maintenance/Overhaul												
Picnic Table Repair/Painting												
Building Maintenance/Paint/Clean Up												

Primary



Secondary



4. Budget

Financial Resources

The recent economic conditions, the tax policies and revenue collection have negatively impacted the Town of Merrillville as a whole. As a result, the Department has seen a continued decline in its budget. Nonetheless, historically, the Department has had a much lower than average expenditure in the parks and recreation programming. The majority of the annual department expenditures go towards operations. There are very limited amount of funds available for capital improvements. This lack of funding make the Department severely undercapitalized to carry out park improvements, programming, overall upkeep and maintenance.

A review of past expenditures provides a snapshot of trends for future resources.

Table 22 – Merrillville Park Budget History

Category	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Staff	\$155,595	\$155,595	\$155,595	\$153,600	\$153,031
Supplies	\$11,200	\$11,200	\$11,200	\$13,100	\$11,200
Services	\$13,050	\$14,050	\$14,050	\$25,800	\$14,050
Capital Outlay	\$27,000	\$26,000	\$26,000	\$17,500	\$28,564
Non-reverting Fund	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
TOTAL	\$236,845	\$236,845	\$236,845	\$240,000	\$236,845

The Department's budget in 2005 was \$219,075 or about \$7.17 park expenditures per resident. This budget has remained almost constant for the last five years. The projected budget of the Department for 2010 is expected to be about the \$236,845. Table 23 presents the budget history for the Department since 2006. According to this table, the budget changed over the last five years, an amount totaling \$20,925.00. A budget comparison with other communities shows Merrillville to continues to be the lowest in expenditures for parks and recreation activities.

Table 23 – Park Expenditure per Resident

COMMUNITY	POPULATION	2009		2010	
		Budget	\$/ Resident	Budget	\$/ Resident
Merrillville	31,519	\$240,000	\$7.61	\$236,845	\$7.51
Portage	35,503	\$1,113,234	\$31.36	\$1,113,234	\$31.36
Schererville	29,496	\$699,066	\$23.70	\$699,066	\$23.70
Valparaiso	27,880	\$2,518,536	\$90.33	\$2,524,174	\$90.54
Hobart	27,133	\$451,000	\$16.62	\$481,280	\$17.74
Munster	23,637	\$2,933,929	\$124.12	\$3,500,000	\$148.07
Crown Point	22,276	\$933,000	\$41.88	\$900,000	\$40.40

Parks Expenditures Per Resident

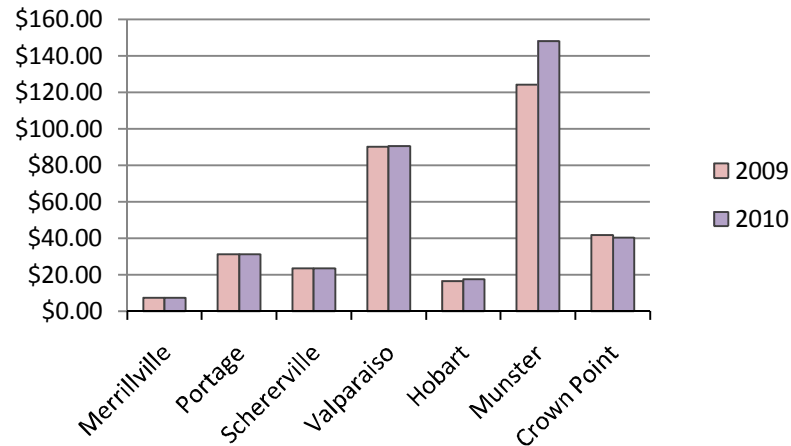


Table 24 – Park Regional Park Acreage Comparisons

Town	Population	Total Park		Area/ 1000 pop.
		No. Parks	Area [acres]	
Merrillville	30,560	19	74.3	2.4
Cedar Lake	9,279	18	47.6	5.1
Dyer	13,856	21	194.0	14.0
East Chicago	32,414	20	239.0	7.4
Gary	102,746	57	1206.0	11.7
Griffith	17,332	6	32.1	1.9
Hammond	83,048	35	920.3	11.1
Highland	23,546	23	244.5	10.4
Hobart	25,363	20	204.8	8.1
Lowell	7,438	7	38.3	5.1
Munster	21,511	22	340.2	15.8
Portage	33,496	13	534.0	15.9
Schererville	28,881	24	153.3	5.3
Whiting	5,137	5	23.8	4.6

5. Park Facilities

The Town of Merrillville has 20 parks, 2 trails and one facility. The Pruzin Center acts as a community center, accommodating a variety of activities for residents of all ages. Merrillville Parks and Recreation facilities have been updated to define each park type to reflect recreation trends. Additional opportunities for fitness-related activities are available throughout the Town, offered by private and public facilities.

The NRPA Classification System for parks and recreation facilities classifies parks according to their size, purpose, and population that they serve. Different types of parks are identified in the following section. The existing parks and other facilities are identified in the following Existing Conditions Maps.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks serve people living within an approximately 0.5- to 1-mile radius. They are generally 5 to 10 acres in size and often located adjacent to or near public school properties. The park should have adequate street frontage to promote neighborhood identification and provide for public safety and security. They should contain open turf areas, trees, paved walking paths, playgrounds, sitting areas, restroom facilities, and passive open space. Recreational amenities may include practice fields, sport courts, picnic facilities, plaza space, and public art.

Neighborhood Park		25.00
Crescent Lake		4.00
Devonshire		8.00
Rosenbalm Park		4.00
Southbrook Park		6.00
John A. Stefek Park		3.00

Mini-Parks

Mini-parks, tot lots, children's playgrounds, and community gardens are single-purpose properties offering a limited range of passive or active recreational uses. These properties are small (typically less than 2 acres in size). On a per-unit basis, mini-parks are expensive to construct and maintain, and they generally attract limited use.

Mini Park	19.33
Barclay	0.25
Forest Hills	1.50
Hendricks Park	1.00
Heroes Park	1.66
Jennings Park	0.75
Kurtis Park	0.83
Lincoln Terrace	4.89
Meadowland	2.00
Meadowland Estate	2.20
Preserve Subdivision - Unnamed Park	0.00
Joseph Petruch, Sr. Park	2.00
Savannah Ridge	0.25
Wirtes Park	2.00

Community Parks

Community parks serve populations of 7,500 to 15,000 living within a service area of approximately 1- to 2-mile radius. These parks are generally 10 to 30 acres in size. The park should have adequate street frontage to promote community identification and provide for public safety and security. These parks may contain large open turf areas to accommodate seasonal sport fields (soccer, football, and others), baseball and softball fields, practice areas, sport court facilities (tennis, volleyball, and others), picnic shelters, playgrounds, trails, and art.

Community Park	49.00
Pruzin Park	49.00

Linear Parks/Trails

Linear Parks and trails serve the entire community by providing walking, biking, and other non-motorized recreational opportunities. Trails often provide access to sensitive environmental areas. They also facilitate linkages between parks and neighborhoods across town. Linear Parks may have paved or unpaved trails and include support facilities such as trailheads parking lots, restrooms, bridges, visitor orientation, interpretive signage, and resting areas.

Several sections of the Erie-Lackawanna and C & O Trails have been completed over the past few years. The Town of Merrillville maintains the 1.89-mile section of the Erie-Lackawanna Trail, located south of U.S 30 between Schererville and Crown Point. The most recent trail work was completed in the Merrillville section of the C & O trail. Work on the C & O trail through Merrillville from Broadway, west nearly to Taft Street was completed in 2009. The C & O trail work included trail heads at 73rd and Broadway, 70th and Harrison and an end point between 70th-73rd and Taft, between Innsbrook County Club's golf course and driving range.

Trail/Linear Park	41.66
C & O Trail	18.86
Erie-Lackawanna Bike Trail	22.80

Schools

Open space is also available in the Town to Merrillville through the Merrillville Community School Corporation and three private schools. The Merrillville Community School Corporation provides indoor and outdoor recreational facilities primarily for use by the enrolled students. However, many facilities are available for use by organized groups or the general public on an arranged basis.

There are also three parochial schools in town that have indoor & outdoor recreational facilities. These schools are:

- Aquinas Catholic Community School,
- St. Peter & Paul School,
- Andrean High School.

Other Open Spaces

The Town of Merrillville enjoys several other open spaces in the Town, including several Ross Township parks and Lake County parks.

Town Facilities

Meadowdale Park - 8 acres

Preserve as a natural area.

Township Facilities

Country Club Heights - 2.25 acres

This small neighborhood park is a 2.25-acre park and once housed a play set and basketball court. Currently, the site is primarily unused without any facilities. Remnants of the basketball court still exist in the park.

Merrillville Cemetery - 1.9 acres

This historic cemetery is home to several deceased residents from the nineteenth century, including several Civil War veterans. The cemetery proper is adjacent to 0.8 acres of land to the west that features the Veterans Memorial.

Hidden Lake Park - 108 acres

Facilities and recreation opportunities offered in this park include a vast array of activities. The newest addition to the park is a four-field softball complex on the east end of the park. The existing facilities include:

- A lake (with beach, fishing, paddle boat rentals, and a skating pond in winter)
- Sport facilities (soccer, baseball, sand volleyball)
- Playground
- Sledding hill
- Gazebo
- Numerous picnic facilities

Skinner Park - 5.25 acres

This park was named for pioneer land developer Olind Skinner. Ross Township assumed maintenance responsibility of this park in 1978. This park offers:

- A 2.5-acre pond
- Picnic shelter
- Playground

Ross Pool

Ross Pool was originally built as part of the Meadowdale subdivision in 1956. Ross Township took ownership in 1975. The facility is primarily used by the residents on the north side of town. The facility features:

- An L-shaped pool with water slide (ranging in depth from 3 to 12 feet)
- A small wading pool

- Men's and women's shower rooms and bathrooms
- Concession area

Independence Park - 8.6 acres

Originally known as Independence Park Sportsmen's Club, this park was acquired by Ross Township in 1976. It offers:

- Fishing
- Picnicking
- Playground and concession stand that are open in the summer months

Lake County Facilities

Deep River County Park - 1,050 acres

This large county park occupies parts of Merrillville and Hobart and is a regional destination point. The Deep River Waterpark, a popular summertime attraction, is probably the most visible part of the park. The park is also a very popular site for wedding ceremonies & receptions. Many clubs and seasonal events are also hosted here. Other attractions include:

- A working sawmill & gristmill
- Picnic shelters
- Walking & equestrian trails
- Fishing area
- Canoe launch
- Numerous play fields

Turkey Creek Golf Course

With the closing of Broadmoor Golf Club, Turkey Creek Golf Course is the only remaining public golf course in Merrillville. Turkey Creek Golf

Course is a popular 18-hole facility, with several greens on both sides and crossing Turkey Creek. There is also:

- A pro shop
- Snack bar
- Dining/banquet facilities

Oak Ridge Prairie - 807 acres

This county park occupies parts of Merrillville and Griffith, and there are plans to expand to 1,800 acres in the future. The park is mostly open and natural. Oak Ridge Prairie is the western starting point for the Oak Savannah Trail that traverses through Griffith, Gary, and Hobart. The park offers:

- A playground
- Picnic facilities
- Fishing pond
- Walking trails which are used for cross-country skiing in the winter
- Extensive prairie areas
- A sledding hill in the center of the park

Private Facilities

Innsbrook Country Club - 120 acres

The country club is a private facility open to its members only. The facilities include:

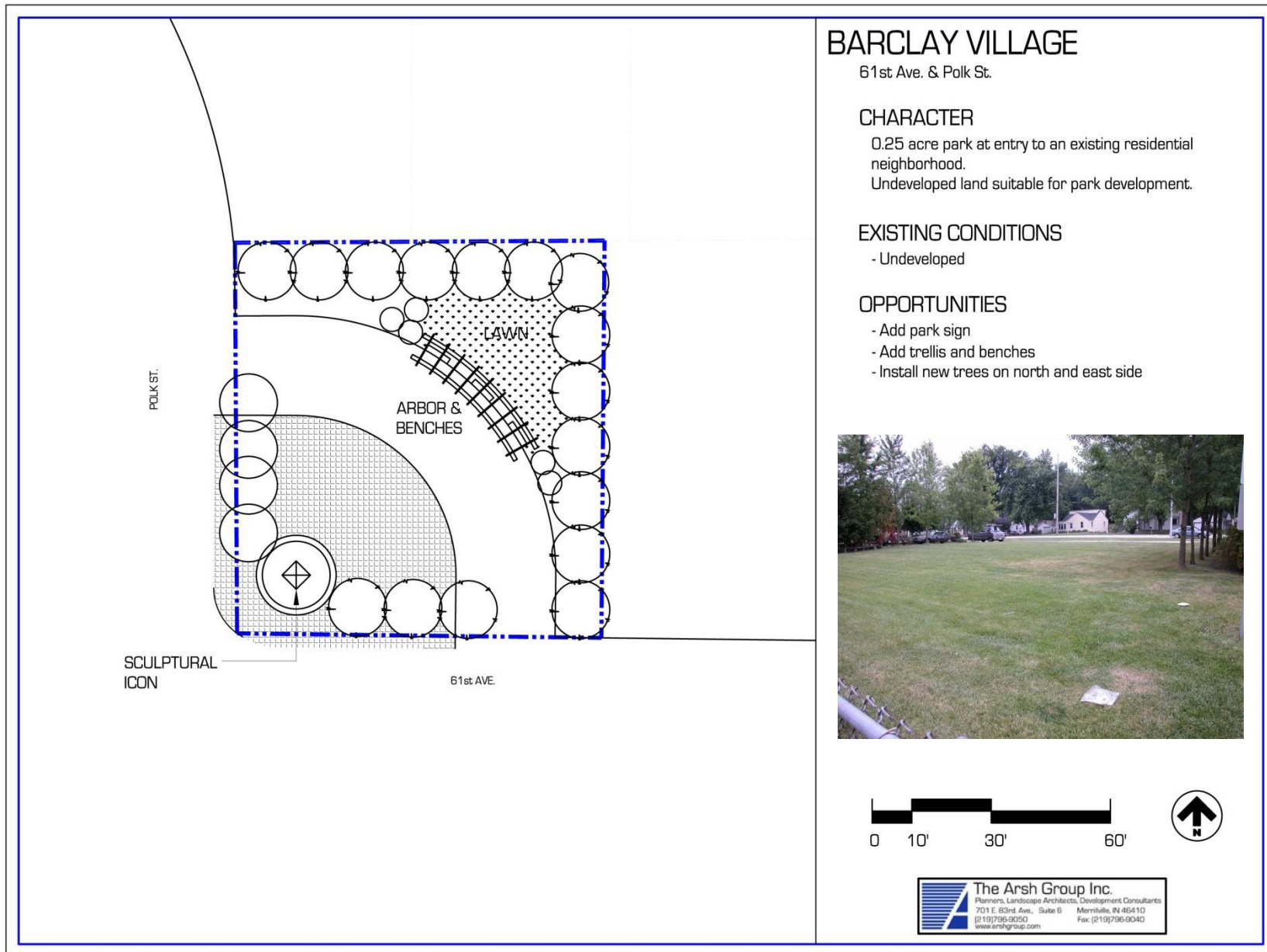
- An 18-hole golf course
- A water slide and pool

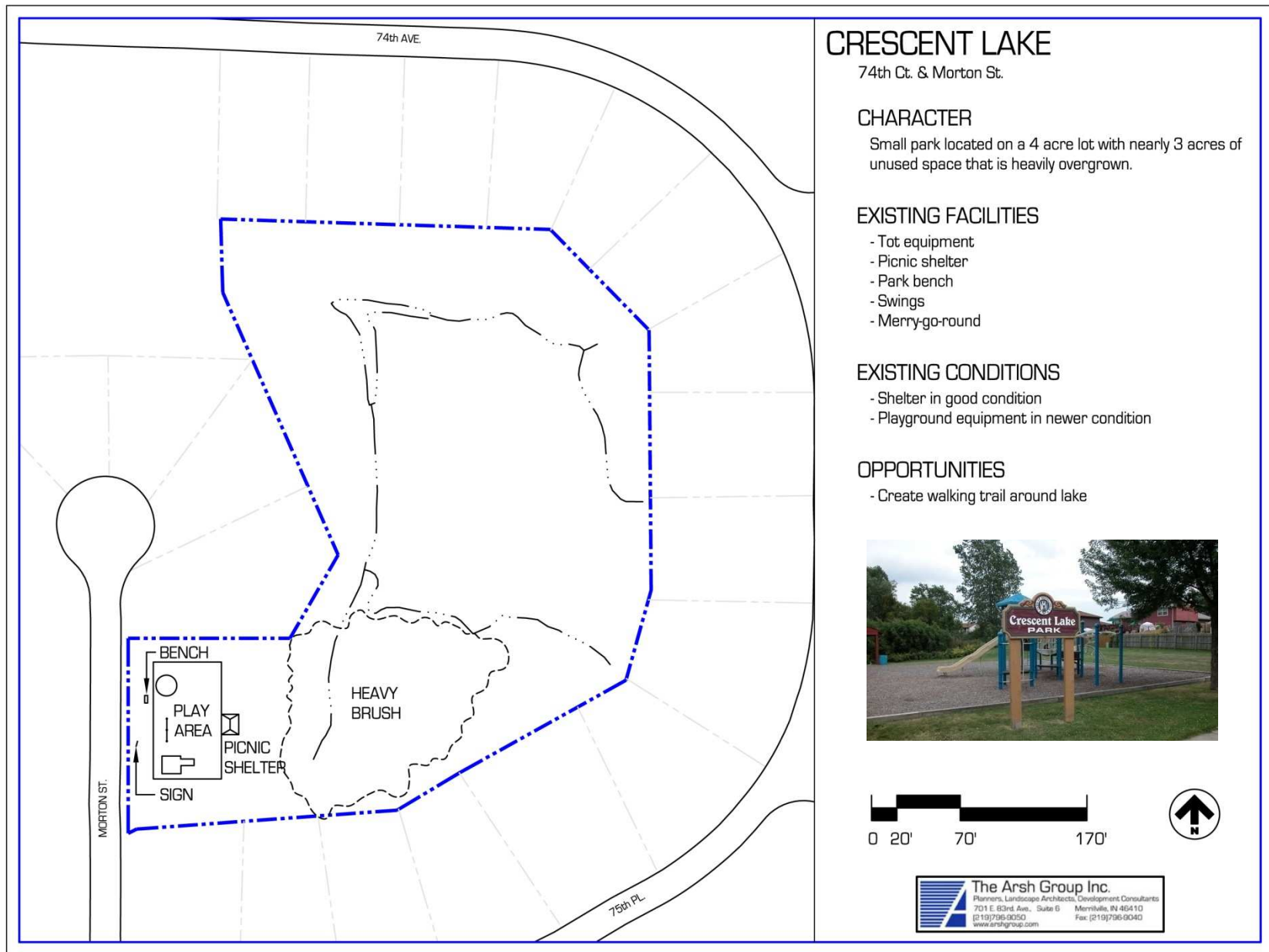
Exercise and Physical Fitness Facilities

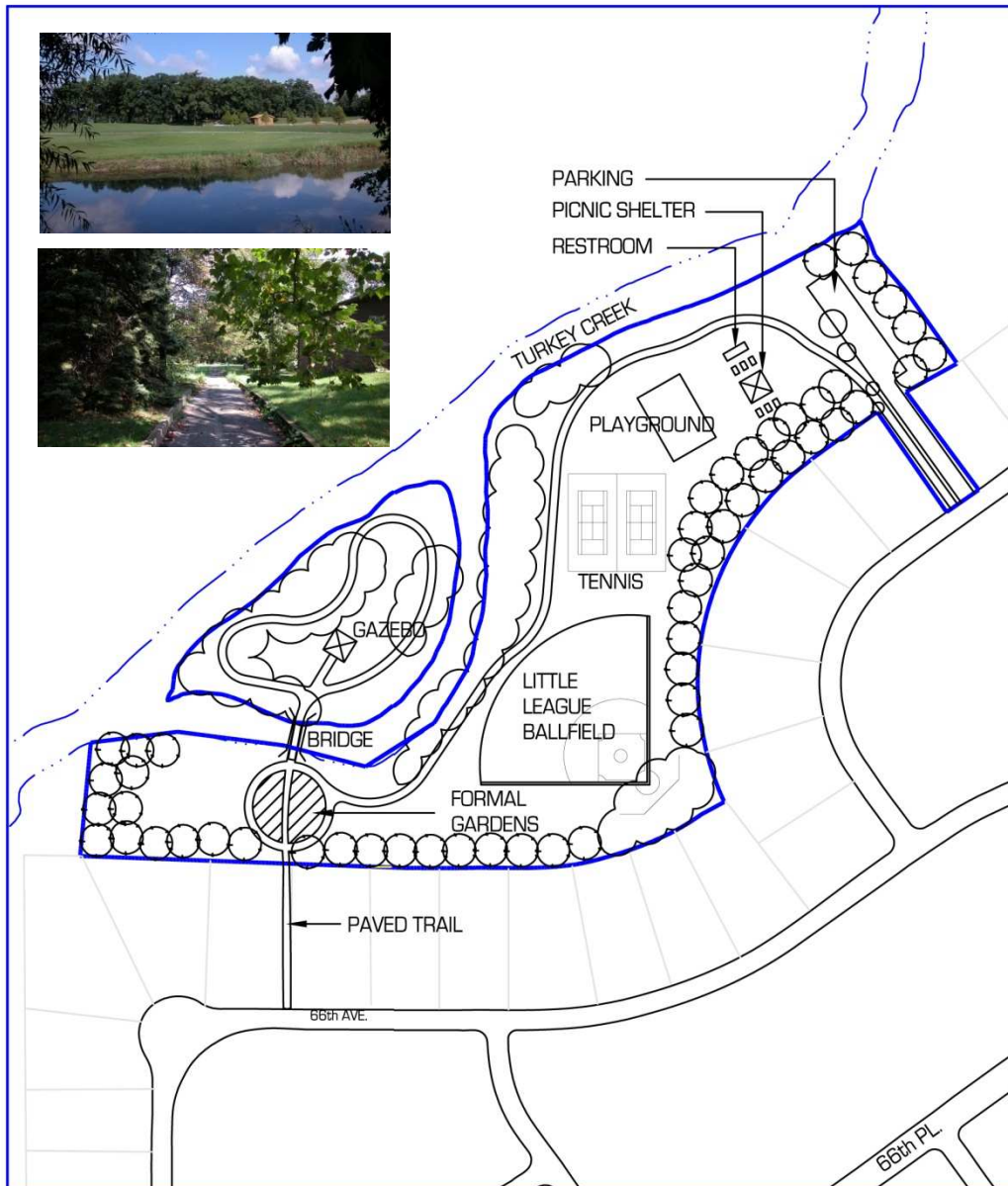
The Town of Merrillville also has three private fitness centers; Southlake Nautilus Total Fitness Center, Universal Fitness and

Training, and Flex Gym Health and Fitness Club. These facilities offer a variety of exercise programs that include:

- Weight training
- Cardio training
- Nutrition programs
- Aerobics







DEVONSHIRE PARK

65th Ave. & Harrison St.

CHARACTER

Undeveloped 8 acre area with bridge that crosses creek to overgrown island. Paved trail connects park to 66th Ave.

EXISTING FACILITIES

- Open space
- Paved trail
- Undeveloped island
- Bridge

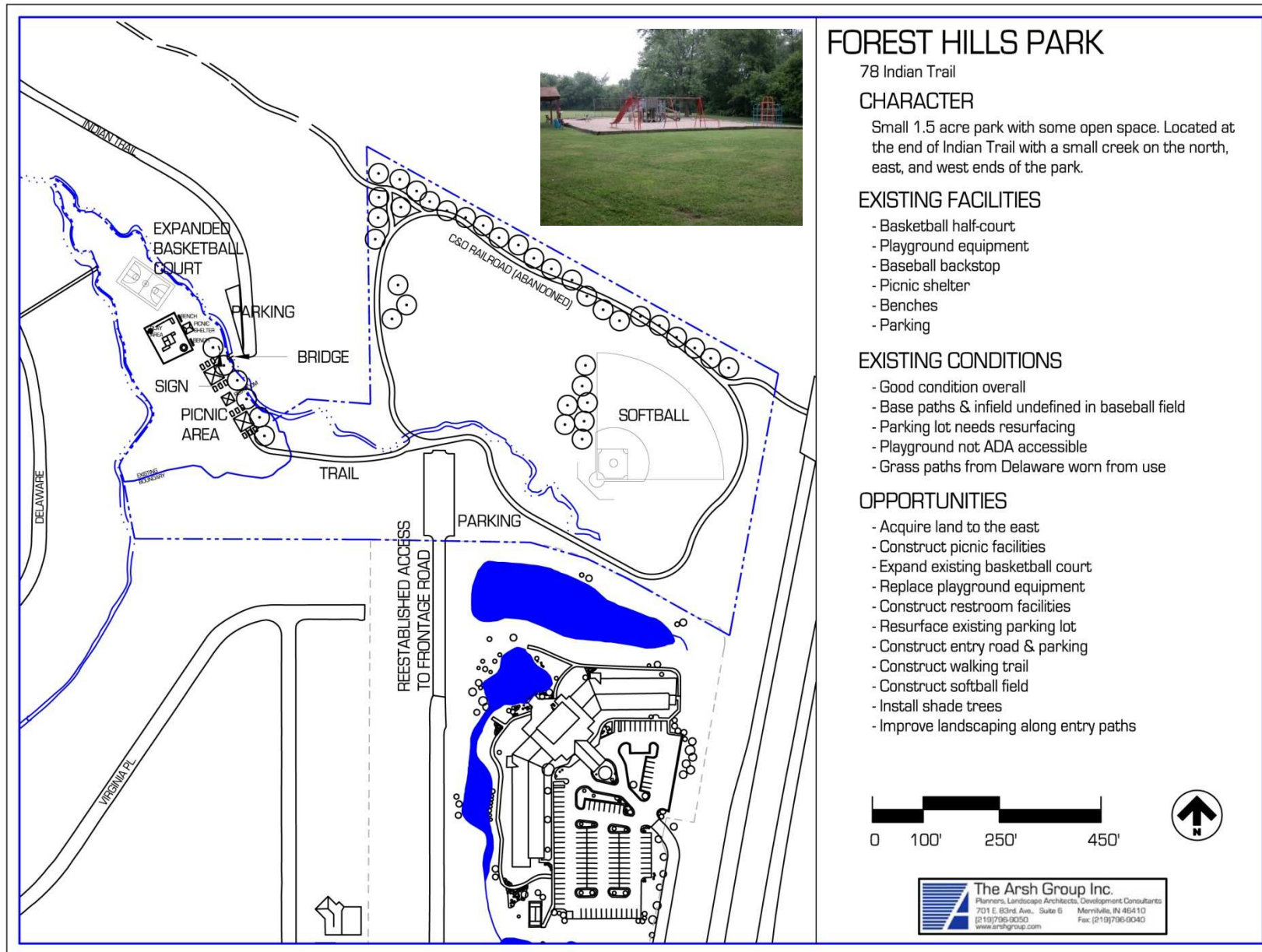
EXISTING CONDITIONS

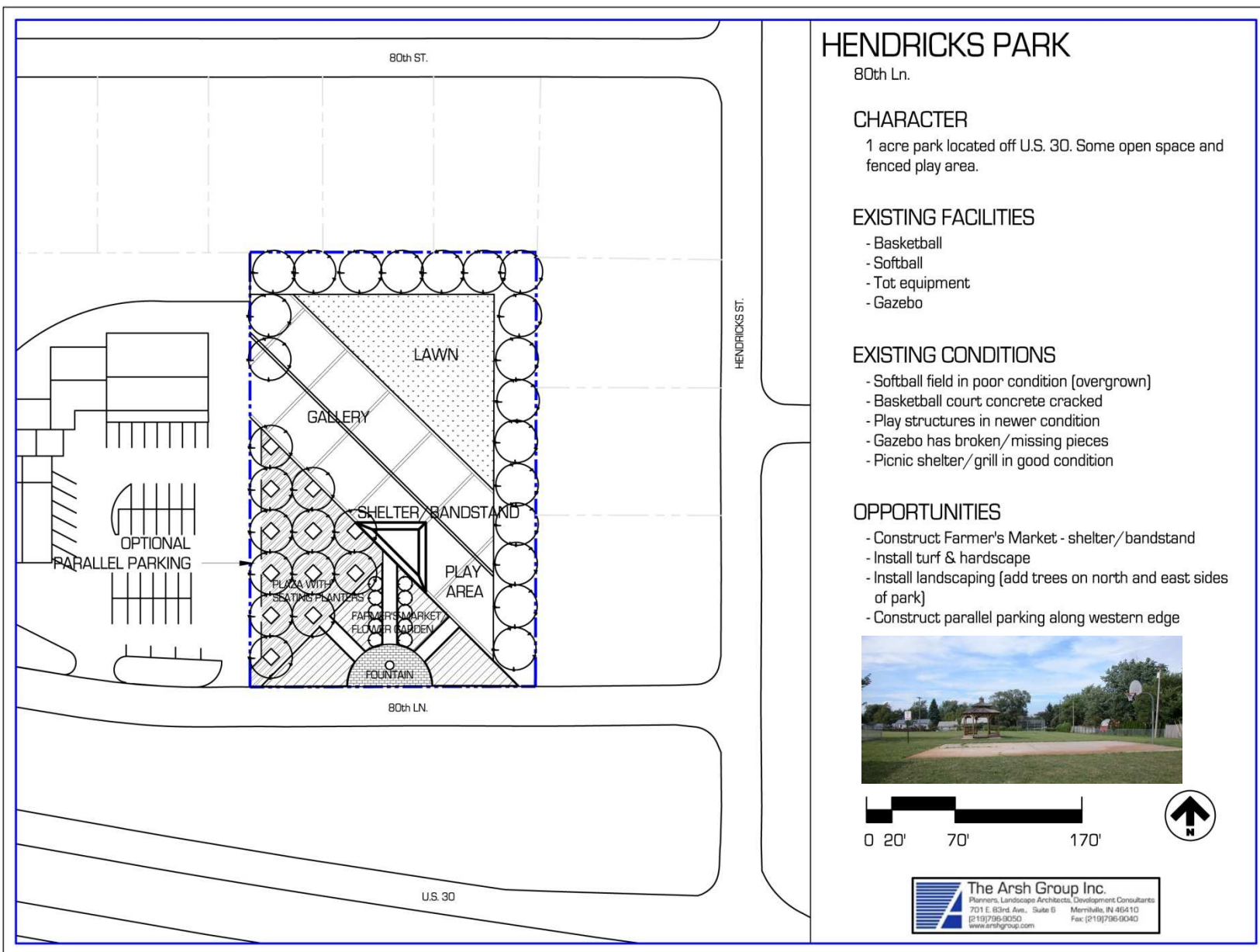
- Bridge in fair condition; could use work
- Paved trail is cracked in places

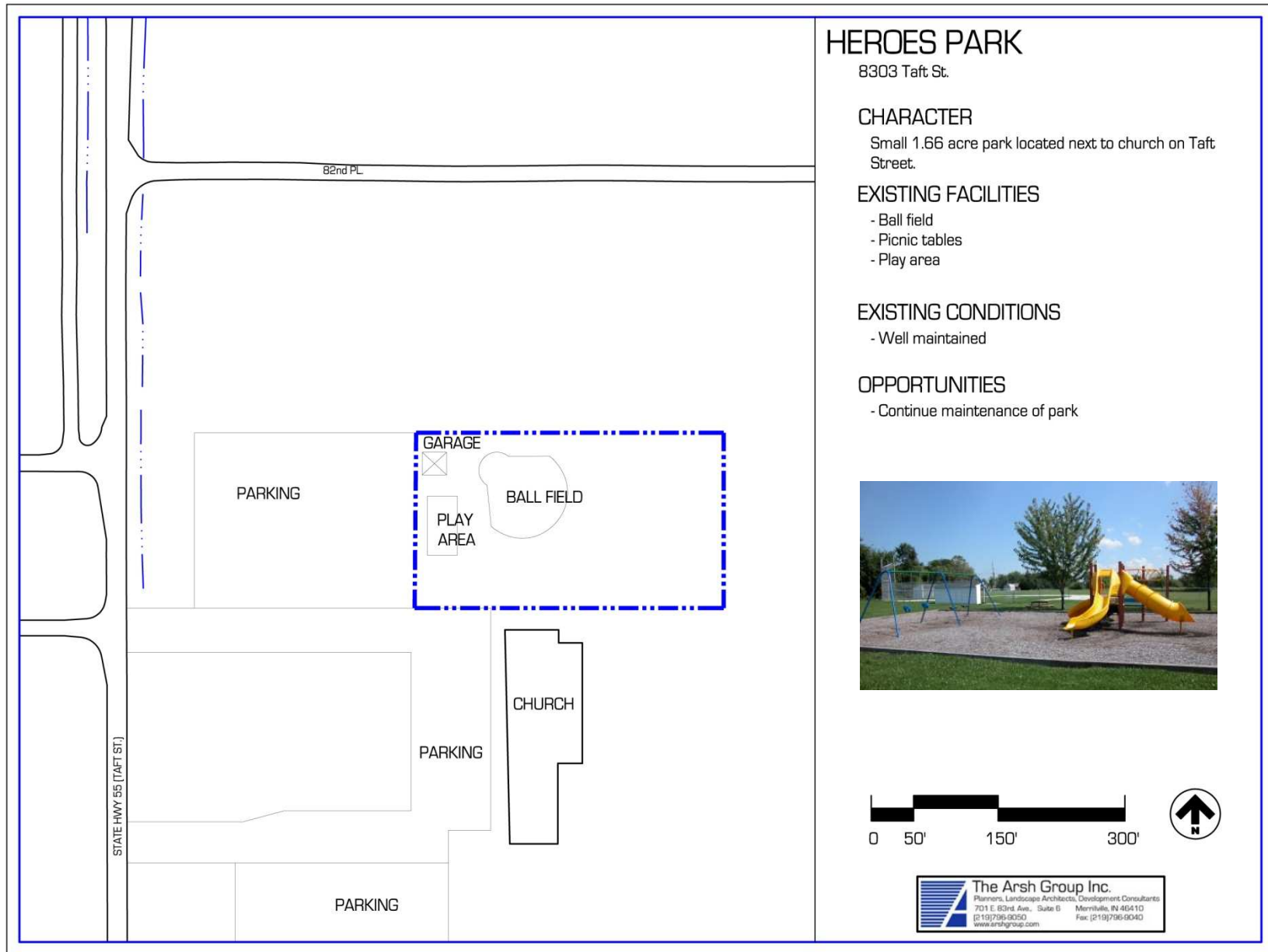
OPPORTUNITIES

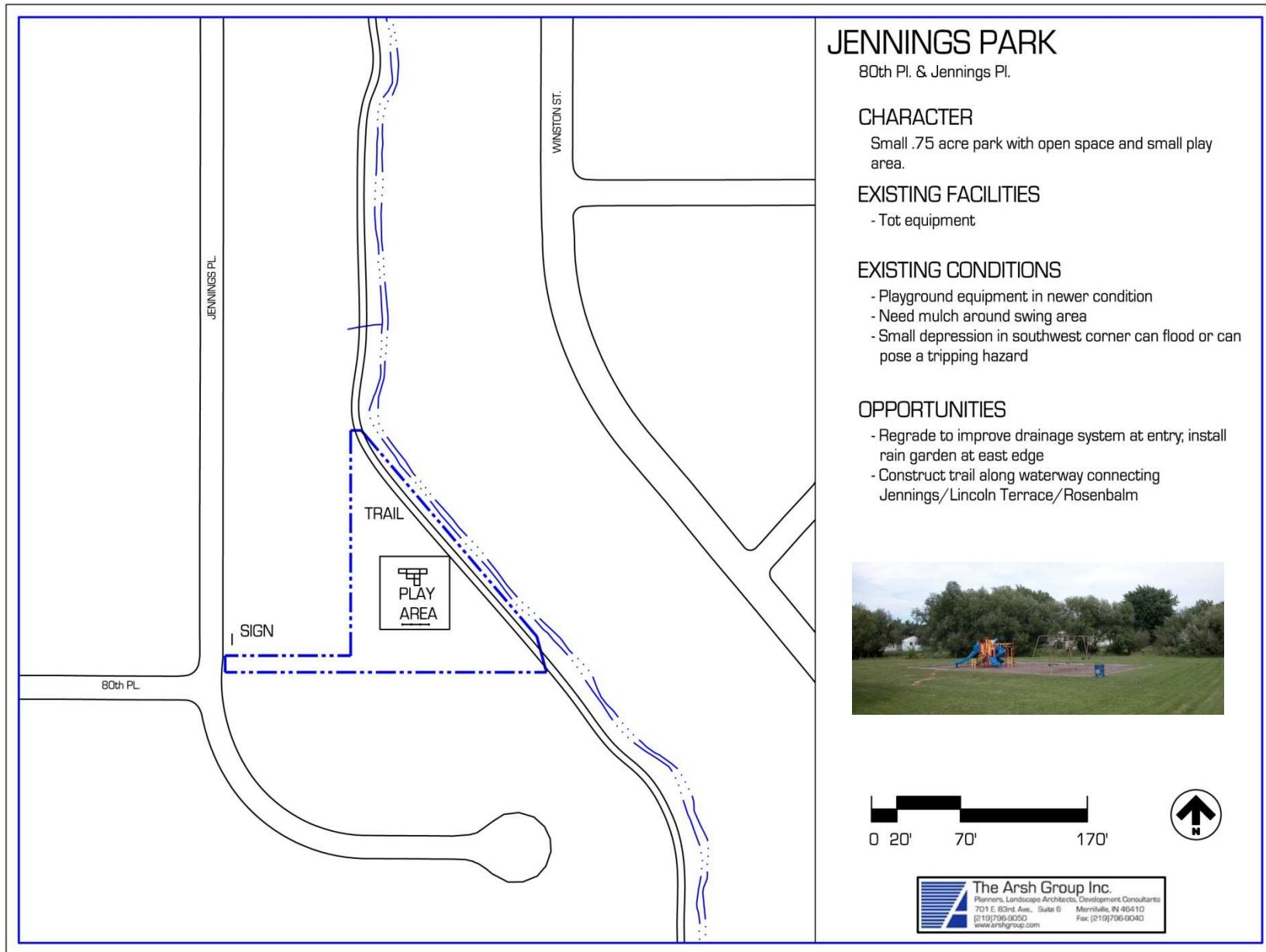
- Install sign for park
- Construct little league field
- Construct playground
- Construct tennis court
- Construct picnic facilities
- Construct restroom facilities
- Install parking
- Construct walking & jogging trail
- Install shade trees
- Repair path & bridge to island
- Renovate island

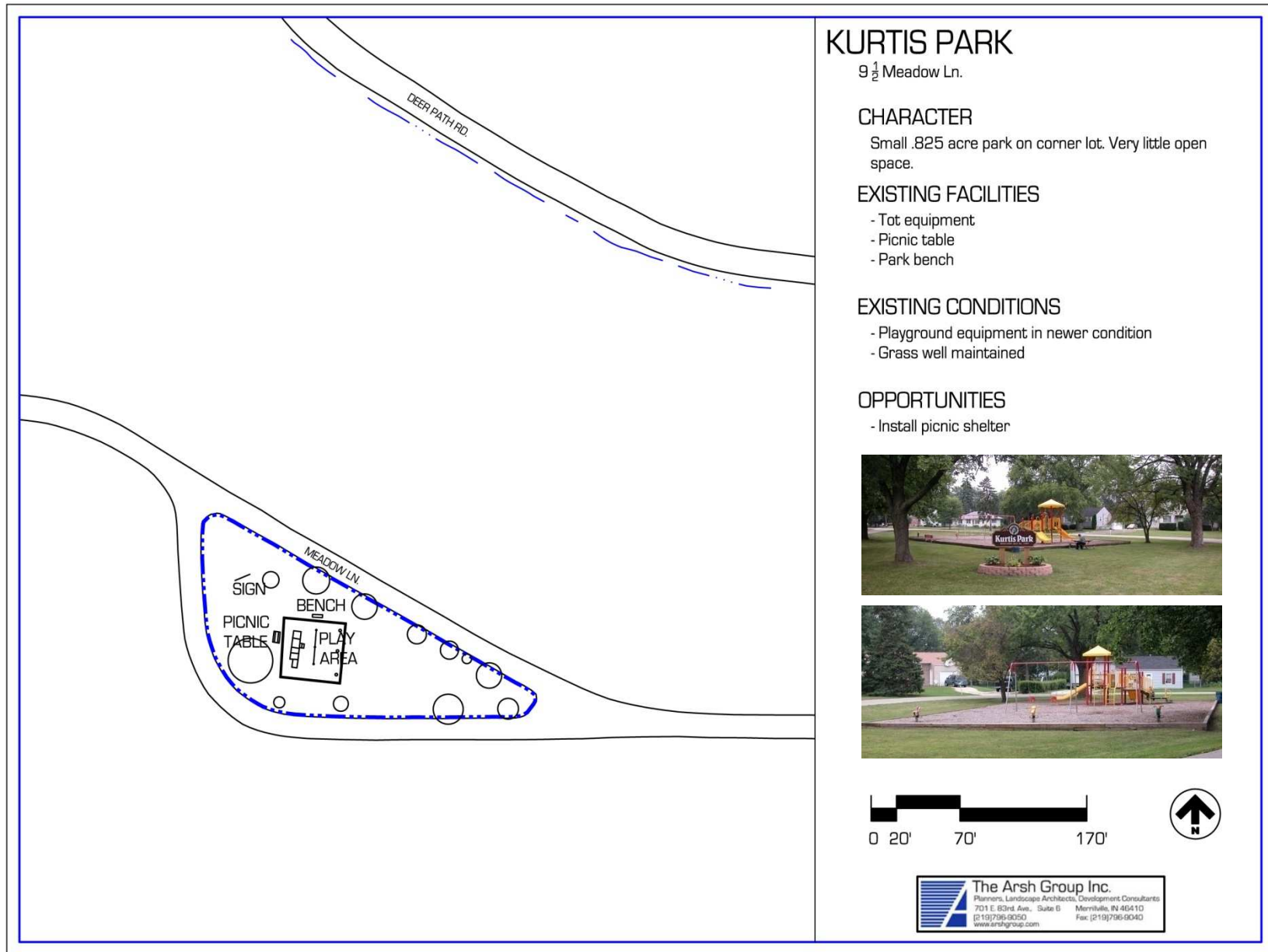




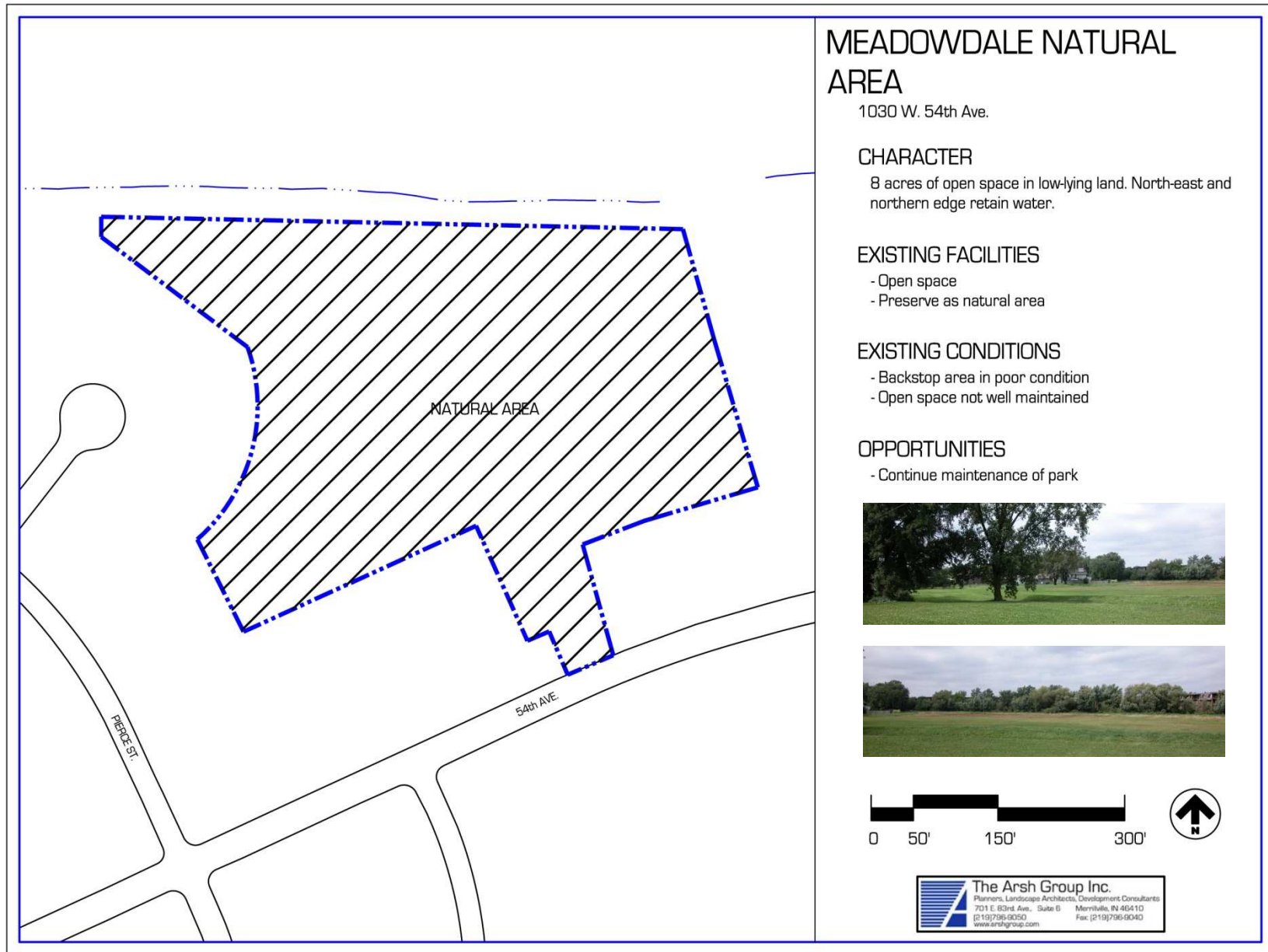


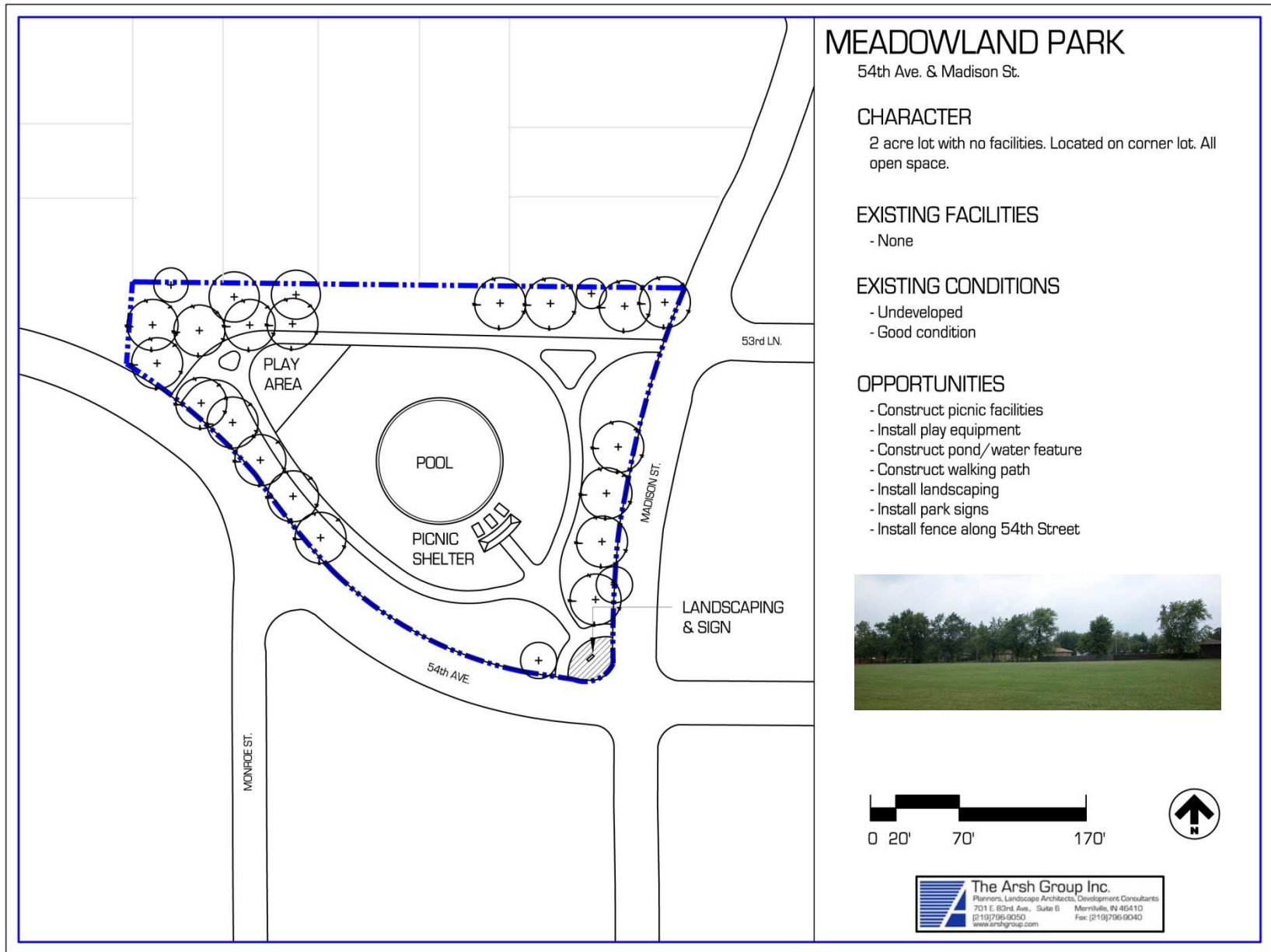




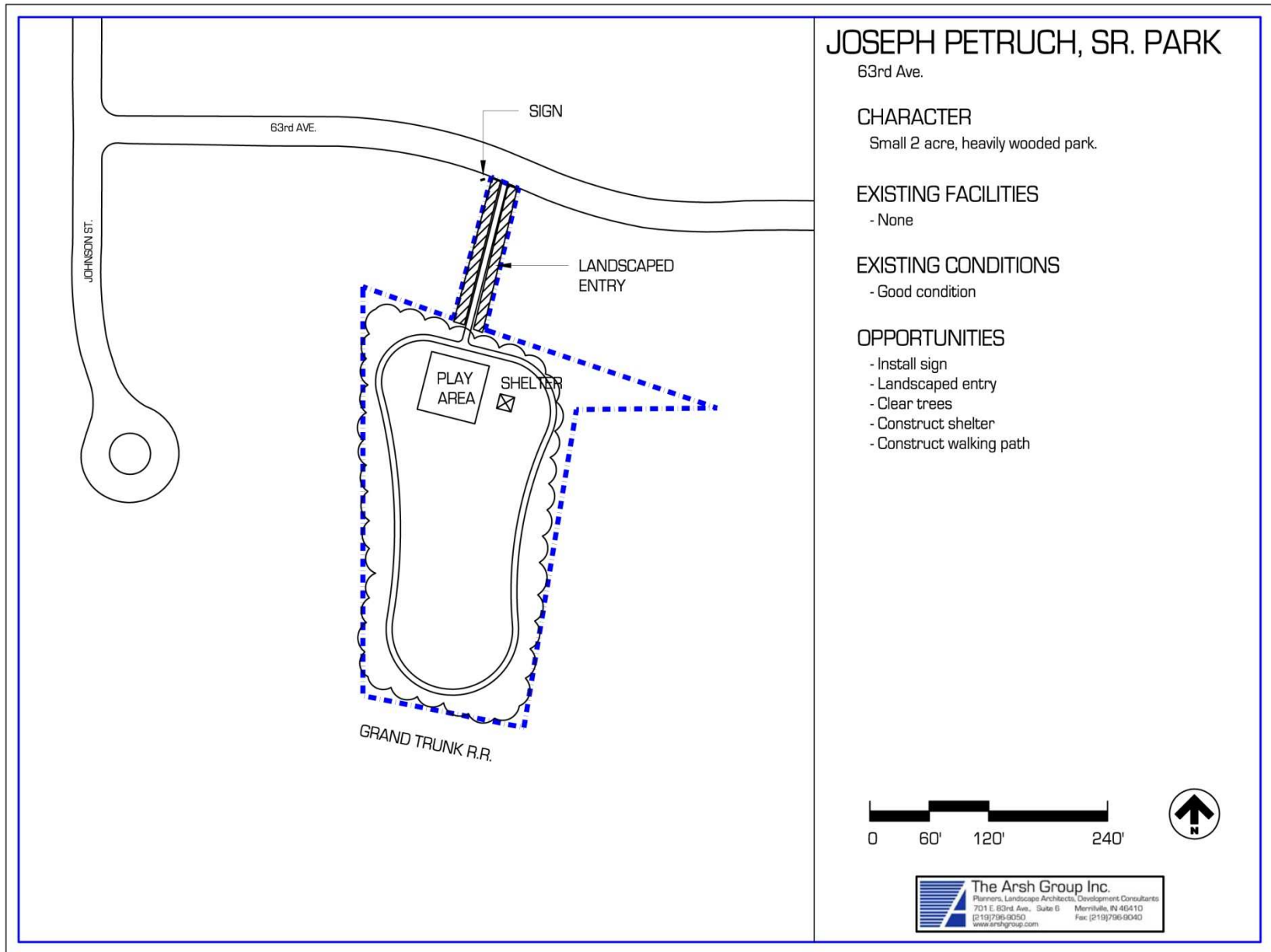


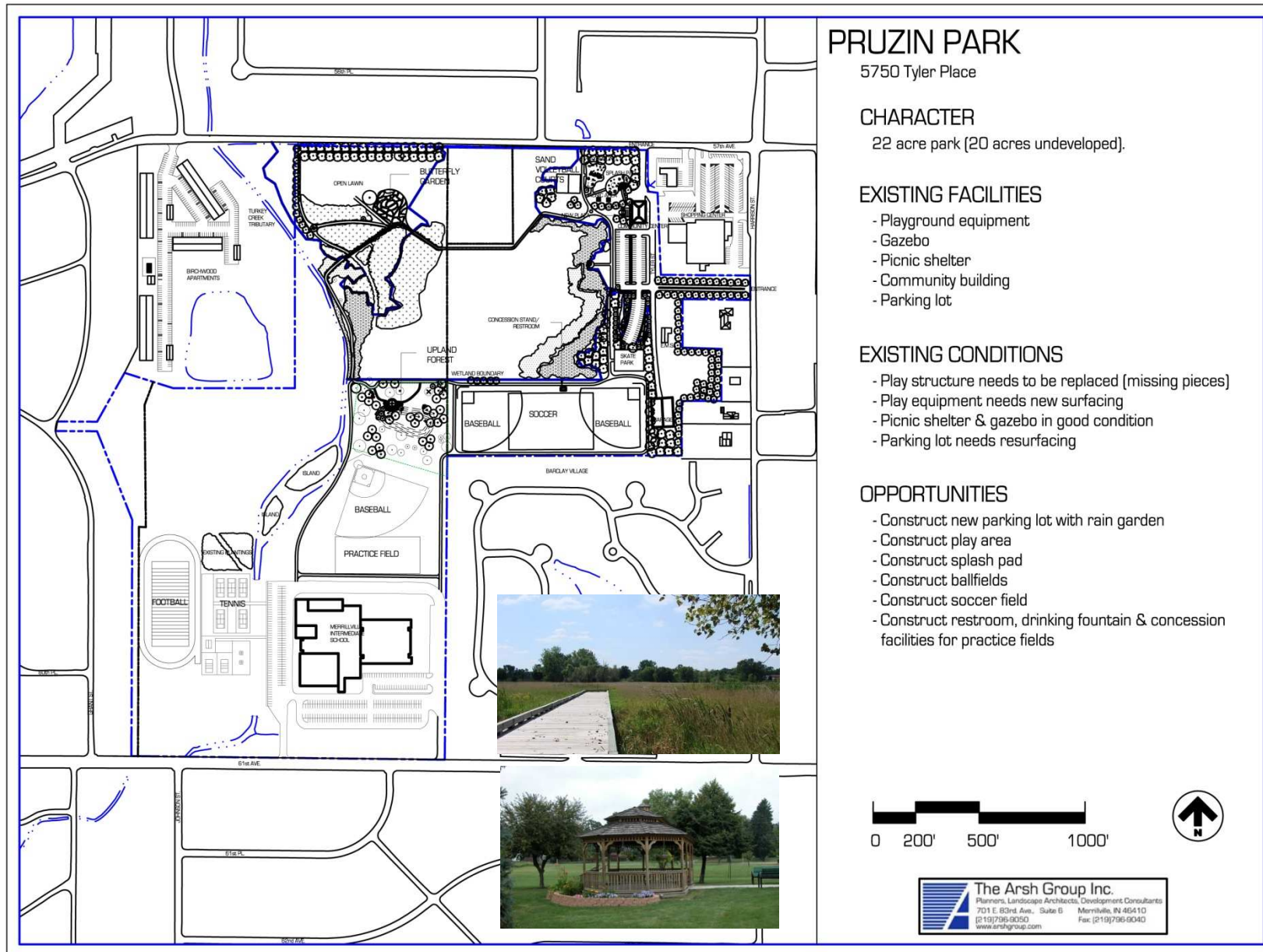




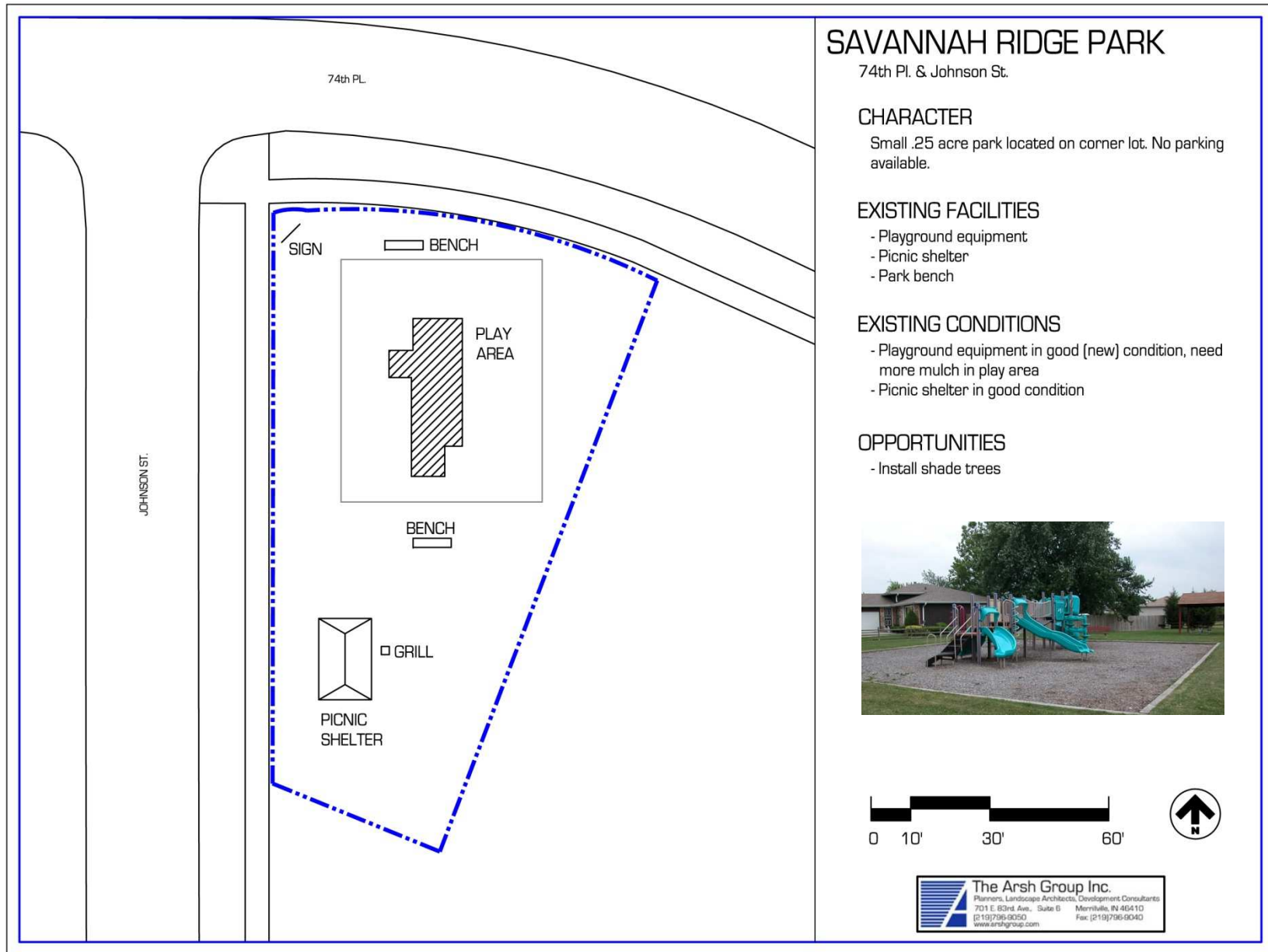


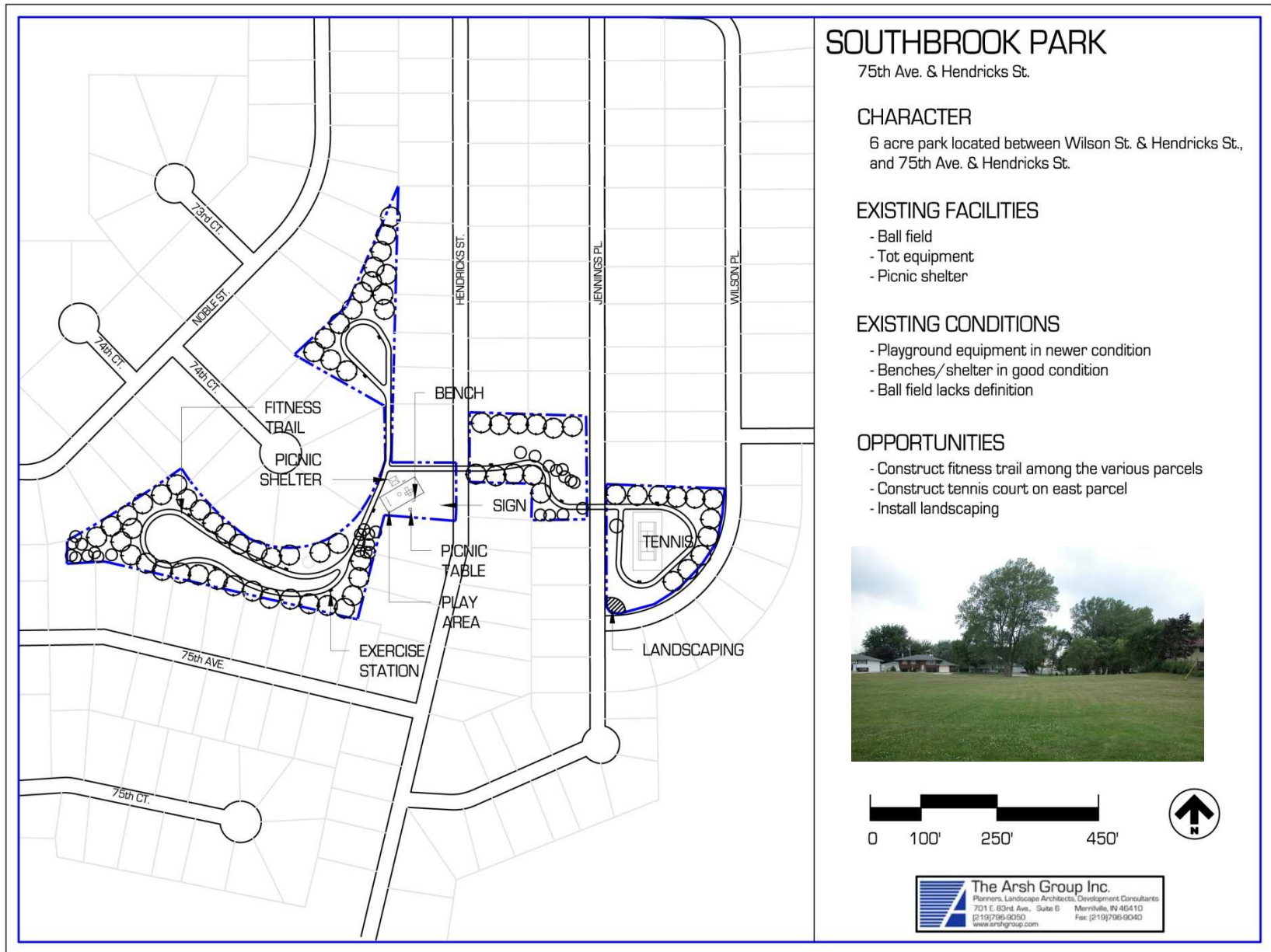




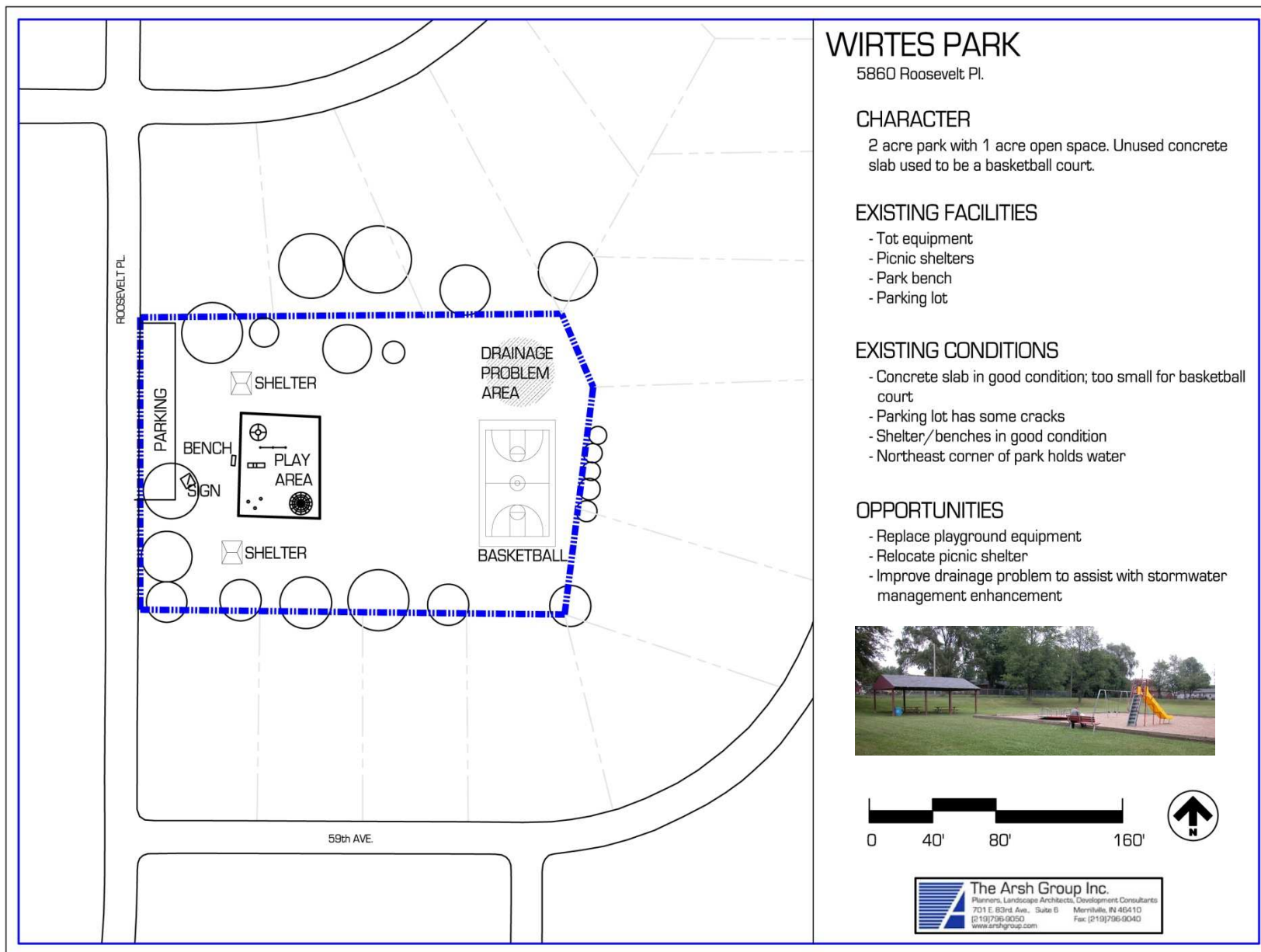


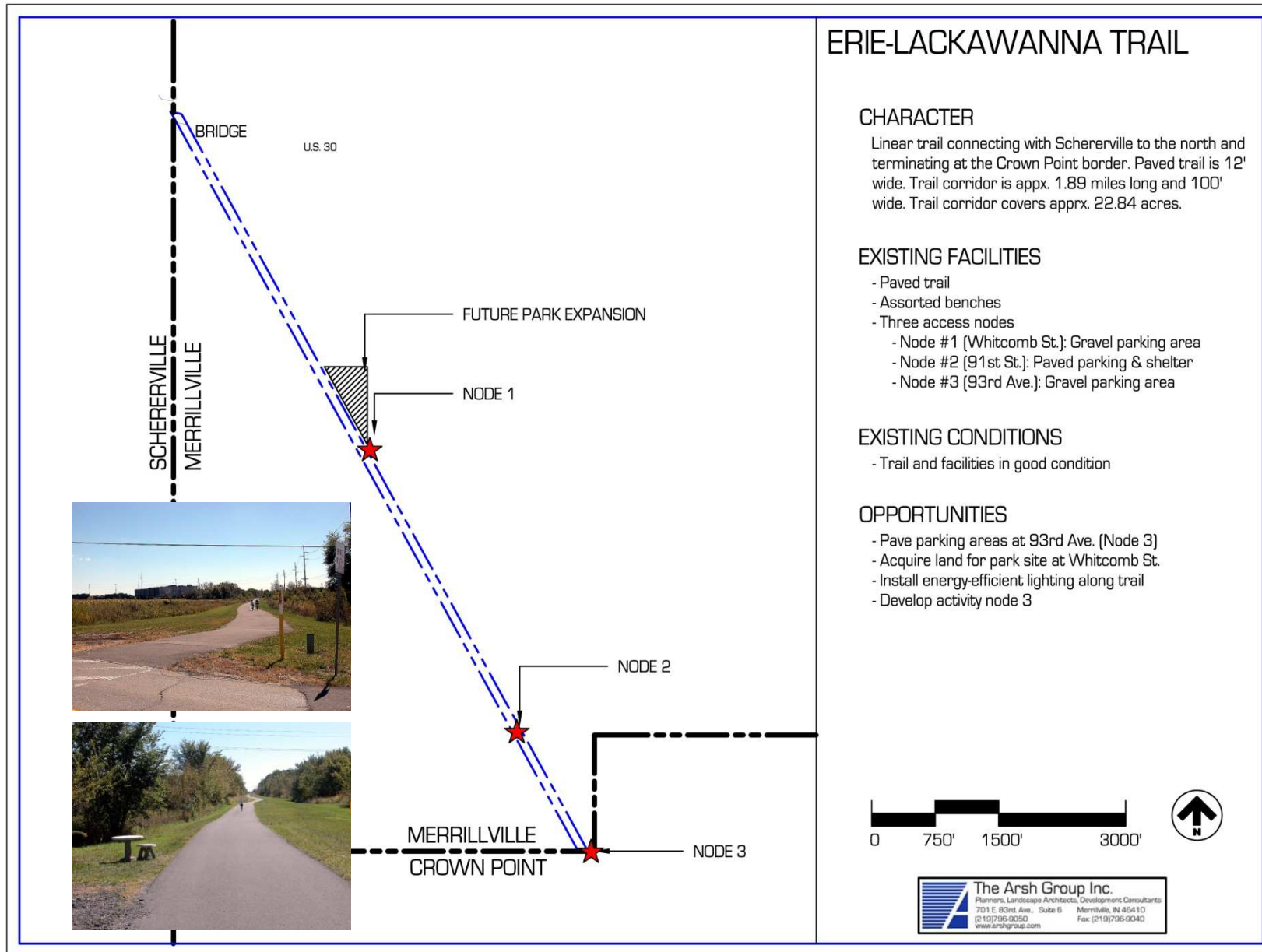


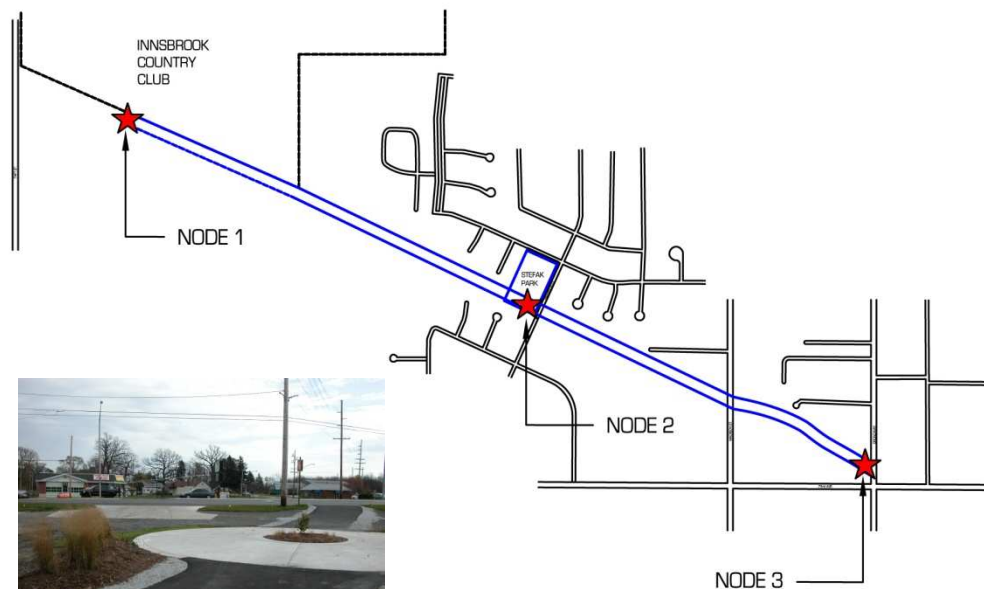












C&O TRAIL

Innsbrook Country Club to Broadway St.

CHARACTER

Linear trail beginning at Broadway to the east and terminating at Innsbrook Country Club. Paved trail is 9' wide. Trail corridor is appx. 1.43 miles long and 100' wide. Trail corridor covers appx. 18.86 acres.

EXISTING FACILITIES

- Paved trail
- Assorted benches
- Three access nodes:
 - Node #1(Innsbrook Country Club): Roundabout
 - Node #2 (Stefak Park): Benches, Picnic Shelter
 - Node #3 (Broadway): Roundabout

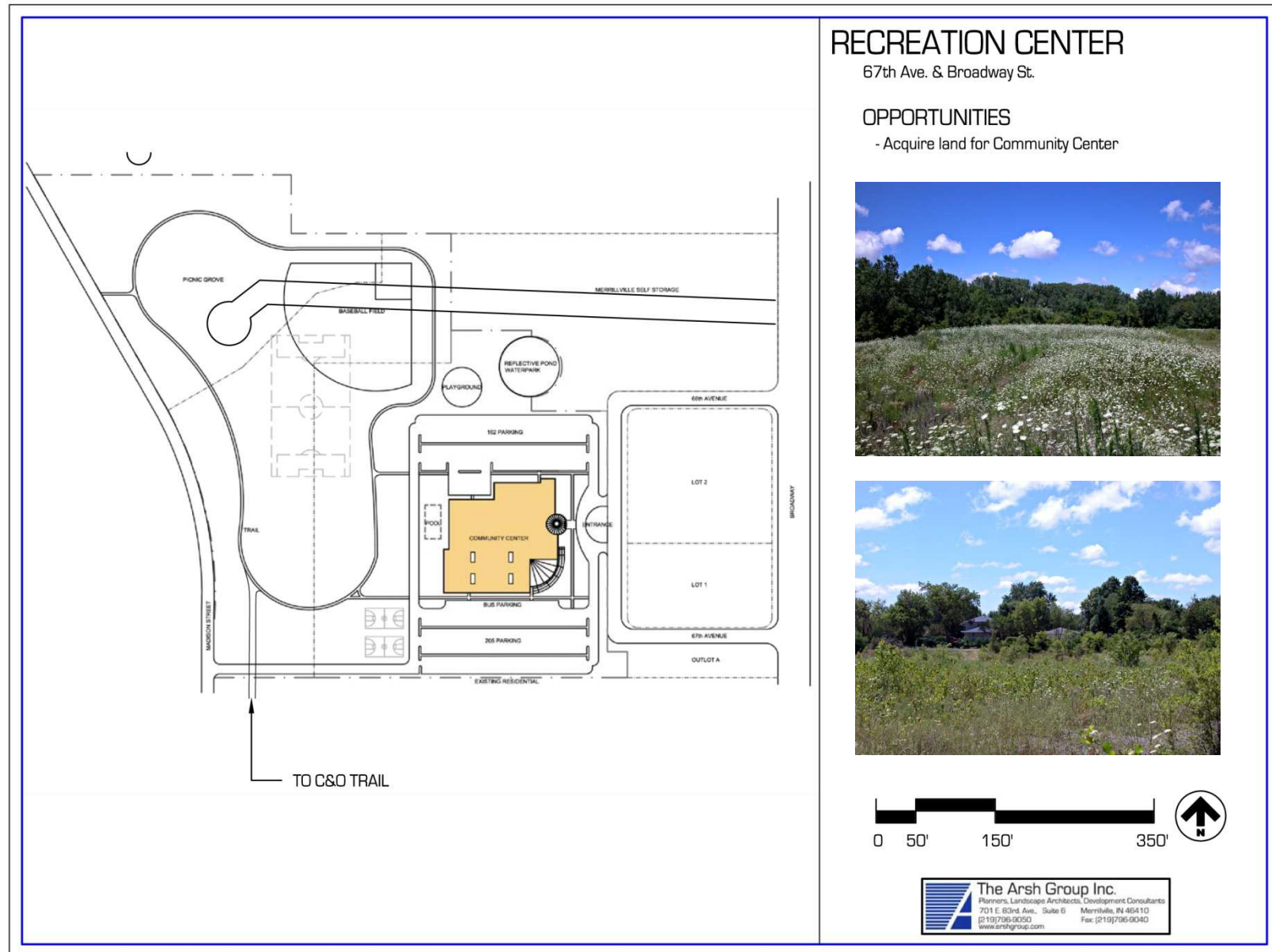
EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Trail and facilities in new condition

OPPORTUNITIES

- Continue maintenance of trail





ANALYSIS

Chapter Four

IV. ANALYSIS

1. Analysis & Assessment

The following section presents an assessment of the recreational activities and facilities in the Town of Merrillville. The analysis of the needs has incorporated the current community conditions and demographic trends. As such the primary factors and trend impacting the demand for recreational facilities and programs are influenced by:

- Continued population growth
- Continued growth in diversity of the population
- Overall housing units increased by 579 units
- Decrease in percentage of younger population
- Increase in middle-age population age 55 to 59
- Significant change in school enrollment characteristics
- Households loss 7.6% of income between 2000 and 2007
- Smaller household size, 2000: 2.72 persons/household; presently: 2.47 persons per household
- Recreation needs

With the exception of the last couple of years and due to the economic climate, the Town of Merrillville has continued to see significant changes in its population character and growth for the last thirty years. The continued growth demands a closer look at the Town's facilities and resources allocated for parks, recreation and leisure services. Growth in residential construction, close to 600 new units for the last five years, and continued commercial development are two elements of the community's change. The population in general, has continued to increase despite the downturn, with the highest level of increase being in adults age 55-59. The children population, ages below 20, however have seen a decline in the last few years according to Merrillville School Corporation. Despite this dip

in younger population, the Town's population remains heavily made up of families with children. This is supported by the large overall increase in Merrillville school enrollment trends despite last two years' drop. One age demographic where the population percentage has not significantly changed is the elderly population (age 60-74).

The family income, similar to population, has increased proportionally. The median family income however has increased slightly in recent years due to economic conditions. According to Census reports, the family income in 2007 increased by about 1.2% since 2000, while household income actually declined. Despite this drop, the high median family income suggests a healthy demand for leisure services and activities.

Despite the recent economic downturn, there is little to suggest that Merrillville as a hub of commercial and office activity in northwest Indiana will lose its dominance in the region. Such dominance and growth will continue to support development of additional residential units. The Town currently contains a large area that is fully undeveloped land, especially south of U.S. 30. These areas offer opportunities for a variety of uses, including residential homes. This corresponds with the latest population projections by the Census Bureau, which projects Merrillville to surpass 38,000 residents by 2020. Other developments currently proposed for the Town, particularly those for commercial and retail, are expected to cause an increase in the need for support facilities for residents filling potential employment opportunities. New businesses, such as the Purdue Technology Center, and other commercial and institutional constructions proposed along Broadway, are expected to fuel additional developments, including residential developments.

The above factors suggest that Merrillville will continue to grow and expand. The Town has several attributes that make it an attractive

community in which to live. These include a low crime rate, excellent access to major highways, good schools, and ample social and cultural amenities. These factors will continue to attract new developments, which, in turn, attract newer and younger families. It will be imperative that Merrillville carefully plan for this growth to ensure that it can provide sufficient facilities, including new parks, to satisfy the growing population.

There are several standard models that can assist in determining the adequacy and level of supply of the parks and recreational facilities in the Town. The most widely used model is the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommended standards for recreation and open space supply. Table 25 shows how Merrillville compares to the national standard. As presented in this table, Merrillville shows a serious deficiency in overall park lands, particularly large community parks. As a whole, the Town lacks substantial amount of park land. Among different park types, the town only meets neighborhood standards in terms of acreage. But as it is reported in the next Chapter, most parks lack facilities and require improvements. It should also be noted that these standards apply system-wide. The specific needs and demands of an individual neighborhood may be different and require a more in-depth analysis. This analysis only takes the Town's park facilities into account; it does not include the Erie-Lackawanna and C & O Trail, the Township, or County parks that exist within Merrillville.

Table 25 - Merrillville Park Facility Analysis

FACILITY TYPE	RECOMMENDED ACREAGE/ 1000 POP.	EXISTING SUPPLY/ 1000 POP.	COMPARISON
Overall Park System	6.25-10 Acres	2.29	Well Below Average
Community Park	5-8 Acres	0.72	Well Below Average
Neighborhood Park	1-2 Acres	1.57	Average

Table 25 shows a comparison of Merrillville's facilities with the recommended standard. An analysis of existing facilities was completed in November 2009. At the time of the study the total Merrillville park acreage was 101.33 with more than 41 miles of trails. The standard for trails is 0.10 mile of trails per 1,000 population and Merrillville meets that standard.

As a whole, Merrillville's park and recreation facilities are far below recommended national averages for park facilities. A regional comparison with other communities also shows that Merrillville has substantially lower expenditures and park land acreage per resident (Please see Tables 23 & 24 in Chapter Three.)

This condition is a disadvantage for the Town which needs to be corrected. National Standards indicate that the Town lacks more than 235 acres of park land if it were to meet its current population needs. In addition most Town parks lack facilities, equipments or left in their natural state despite opportunity that exists. The Town will need to look at this demand in a more concerted and orderly manner and establish a process to meet its current and future needs. As the population grows, the needs will continue to increase at a higher rate. At the same time, the Town's available open space is lost to other

developments, making suitable parkland less and less available and more expensive.

2. Strategies

In the next Chapter, this Plan proposes ten broad strategies in a modest effort to address the needs of the Town residents. Core principals of these strategies include improving the sense of the community, expanding facilities while maintaining sustainability of the programs. The Plan also stresses the needs for recreational facilities for the community. The proposed strategies for the Plan are:

1. *Improve the sense of community and image*
2. *Expand Park opportunities*
3. *Expand green way and blue way corridors*
4. *Promote sustainability and conservation of open space in the Town*
5. *Improve capacity of the existing facilities*
6. *Expand capacity for recreational opportunities*
7. *Promote Merrillville as a healthy community*
8. *Expand Opportunities for Collaboration in parks and recreational activities.*
9. *Expand opportunities for self-sustaining facilities and programs.*
10. *Expand Funding available to the Department.*

3. Facilities & Parks – Barrier-Free Evaluation

The federal requirements provide that no qualified disabled person shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance or under any program or activity conducted by an agency. The Section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act also requires specific actions from agencies including a self-evaluation of its policies, facilities, programs, and services. The Arsh Group has reviewed barrier free requirements with the Merrillville Parks and Recreation Department as a part of this Plan Update. The review has been conducted in three areas of concerns. The following paragraphs summarize the areas reviewed for this Plan.

Reasonable Accommodations

The Town of Merrillville, Department of Parks and Recreation, has, over the past several years, assessed its facilities to assure compliance with the provisions of the ADA and other statutes. The assessment has included not only the facilities, but also programs and services. As a part of development of this Plan, the Arsh Group has discussed the barrier free requirements and reviewed the accessibility of the facilities, programs and services with the Department. The facility review included review of the conditions of the parks, playgrounds, shelters, restrooms, picnic facilities and accessible routes. The Arsh Group has found several deficiencies, particularly as they concern accessible routes, in the park system. The Arsh Group has also identified several playground structures as not being fully accessible. Many of these playgrounds are old and require replacement. As a whole, however, it is estimated that more than 50% of all park facilities are accessible albeit there are elements in these parks that require accessibility improvements. The following Table 26 identifies playgrounds that are deficient with the corresponding recommendations and estimated cost.

Table 26 - Disability Improvement Needs

Playground	Recommendation	Cost
Crescent Lake Park	Install walk to connect playground to public right-of-way	\$ 825
Forest Hills Park	Replace existing playground with accessible unit; install walk to connect playground to public right-of-way	\$ 28,300
Hendricks Park	Install walk to connect playground to public right-of-way	\$ 3,300
Heroes Park	Install walk to connect playground to parking lot	\$ 495
Jennings Park	Install walk to connect playground to public right-of-way	\$ 5,280
Kurtis Park	Install walk to connect playground to public right-of-way	\$ 1,620
Lincoln Terrace	Install walk to connect playground to public right-of-way	\$ 19,800
Pruzin Park	Replace existing playground with accessible unit; install walk to connect playground to trail	\$ 35,990
Rosenbalm Park	Replace existing playground with accessible unit	\$ 30,000
Savannah Ridge	Install walk to connect playground to public right-of-way	\$ 660
Southbrook Park	Install walk to connect playground to public right-of-way	\$ 2,310
Stefek Park	Replace existing playground with accessible unit	\$ 30,000
Wirtes Park	Replace existing playground with accessible unit; install walk to connect playground to parking lot	\$ 26,650
Total		\$ 185,230

The Town is aware of the deficiencies and has generally taken “reasonable” steps to make all of its facilities, services, and programs accessible to all citizens. But funding has been an issue for an expedited implementation of needed improvements. For example, the Town is only able to afford replacement of two of the playgrounds (Wirtes and Forest Hills) for the next five years, as noted in the Action Plan. The accessible route issue is a town-wide issue and is beyond the control of the Department. These types of improvements may even take longer as the Town’s ability to improve the streets with the required curbs and sidewalk in many neighborhoods will be very difficult under current economic conditions. Nonetheless, the goal of the Parks Department remains to be fully compliant with maximum accommodations to the extent possible. The Department plans to continue to upgrade its facilities as funds become available.

Assurances

A recipient of Federal financial assistance is required to provide assurances that its programs will operate in compliance with Section 504 and Subpart B, as follows:

- a. Written assurances that a recipient’s program will be operated in compliance with the regulation is required, [43 CFR 17.204 (a)]. In instances where primary recipients or subrecipients extend assistance to others (besides the ultimate beneficiary) written assurances must be secured and maintained by the recipient extending the assistance.

This assurance is provided in the Resolutions to this Plan.

Public Notification

Communities are typically required to proclaim to the public of their policy of nondiscrimination and the procedures for filing complaints. The most important means to address the public notification requirements is through the Park's Department publication, *Recreational Happenings*. This publication is widely and freely distributed throughout the Town three times annually. The Department further posts, both on its website and in print in a conspicuous manner, a nondiscrimination poster which covers all of the required Federal anti-discrimination provisions. The Department also has clearly posted information in the front office which encourages reporting if any individual feels that he or she has been discriminated against or desires further information regarding the Department's nondiscrimination policies.

The Department Director is the responsible coordinating person for receiving and following up on any complaints. Individuals may directly ask the Director to review the Town's nondiscrimination policy and the procedures for filing complaints.

MASTER PLAN

Chapter Five

CHAPTER FIVE – MASTER PLAN

1. Vision

The needs of the community based on data review and assessment and the results of the input from the community played a major role in formulating the overall objectives for the Plan. However, these objectives cannot be fulfilled if they are not part of the broader vision for the Town's future. Thus, the vision for the future as a growing community with strong interest in expansion of its quality of life is a determining factor influencing the Plan. This vision was developed by the Town and sets the overall goals for the 2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The vision for the Plan strives:

To meet the needs of a diverse community where families and children are encouraged to engage in play activities while connecting their lives with the community and enjoying a healthy lifestyle in all seasons.

2. Framework Plan

The Framework Plan will set the stage for the Town's overall parks and recreation development. In support of the Plan vision, a number of objectives, proposals, or initiatives have been identified and developed to specifically address the needs of the residents. The community meetings, discussions and input from the Park Committee, the Town Council, and other stakeholders have further refined the community's objectives for the Plan. These objectives, needs, and initiatives have become the basis for development of the Framework Plan.

The Framework Plan will have the community as its central core. Meeting the communities' needs is the major objective for the Plan. To achieve this objective, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan proposes the following ten strategies. To implement these strategies, several action steps have been proposed or identified:

1. *Improve the sense of community and image*

- Work with the local media to increase exposure for parks activities
- Continue publishing and distributing park newsletter (three times annually)
- Use facilities to build events and create publicity for the Parks Department
- Encourage volunteers' involvement in parks and recreation activities

2. *Expand Park Opportunities*

This strategy will aim to address the needs of a growing population, at both community and neighborhood levels. Under this strategy, facilities and programs will be expanded to offer more activities and opportunities for a variety of population groups. New park sites will be acquired to meet the needs of the new population in outlying areas as the areas are developed. The acquisition will be systematic, and will respond to residential growth. Proposed activities in support of this strategy include:

- Pruzin Park: expand facilities to build a Community Park
- Promote development facilities in existing parks to achieve the goal
- Acquire land for a community center

3. *Expand Green-way and Blue-way Corridors*

This strategy will support development of new trails and walks to strengthen the overall bike and pedestrian system. The Town will also expand its trail system with additional trails and linkages to other trail facilities. Opportunities for this strategy include:

- Continue expansion of C&O trail and link to Hobart and Griffith
- Create a green link along Turkey Creek and Deep River
- Improve linkages to the existing and proposed trails
- Expand support and parks facilities along the proposed trails and pedestrian ways
- Create green link among three parks: Hendricks, Lincoln Terrace, and Jennings Parks

The strategy also aims to improve the Erie Lackawanna Trail to expand its facilities. Two recreational nodes are proposed at two locations, US 30 (former Broadmoor Golf Club), and Whitcomb Street.

4. *Promote Sustainability and Conservation of Open Space in Town*

This strategy will primarily be applied to the areas within the Town that are natural or can expand the natural environment. The Town will try to protect these areas and cooperate with other agencies to acquire these properties for future conservation, parks or open space usage. The majority of conservation areas fall in flood plains, or are wetlands along the two major rivers in Merrillville and their tributaries. The Park Department will acquire properties in the form of conservation easement, where appropriate, along the rivers, or adjacent to the water bodies to create a natural green corridor. The Department will also collaborate with the other agencies to develop a set of new initiative to promote storm water management and sustainability in the Town.

- Promote parks in connection with stormwater management
- Acquire properties or easement along major river corridors
- Promote facility development in close proximity to conservation areas

5. *Improve Capacity of the Existing Facilities*

This strategy will attempt to enhance the capacity and usability of the existing parks. The Town will improve several parks that offer

opportunity for additional facilities. Under this strategy, the following parks will be improved:

- Pruzin Park
- Hendricks Park
- Barclay Village
- Meadowland
- Devonshire
- Petruch

6. *Expand Capacity for Recreational Opportunities*

The growth in population in Merrillville demands availability of a variety of recreational services to meet the needs of a diverse population. The Town will seek funding from outside sources for land acquisition for a recreation center. This facility once developed is expected to meet recreational needs of the Town residents.

- Develop a recreation center
- Expand Recreational programs for youth and families

7. *Promote Merrillville as a Healthy Community*

This strategy aims to expand physical exercise opportunities around Town wherever possible. The program will exist in cooperation with the private sector and other governmental agencies, to support development of facilities which encourage physical activities.

- Expand physical exercise opportunities, particularly around schools
- Continue collaborative efforts with other institutions, particularly in the areas of health & fitness and youth programs

8. Expand Opportunities for Collaboration with Parks and Recreational Activities

This strategy aims to take advantage of other opportunities that exist in the Town by developing joint facilities and/or programs. Included in these efforts are:

- Expand collaboration with the Merrillville School Corporation at MIS
- Expand cooperation with Lake County Solid Waste Management District
- Expand collaborative relationship with other communities to meet special recreational needs

9. Expand Opportunities for Self-sustaining Facilities

The Park Department has been offering a limited number of activities on a regular basis despite shortage of suitable and adequate space. These activities have been generally focused on the youth and the elderly. The Department will seek collaborative opportunities with other agencies or for profit businesses to offer recreation and leisure services which cater to regional market and visitors.

- Promote special events and activities which can generate revenues or are self funding
- Maintain a robust Parks and Recreation non-reverting funds

10. Expand Funding Available to the Department

To meet the recreational needs of a growing community, the Town will need to enhance available resources for development of parks and recreational facilities. To this end, the Town will engage in the following activities:

- Expand funding for parks through grants
- Collaboration with Stormwater Management District and others to develop joint programs
- Seek establishment of a Parks Improvement Capital fund.
- Continue maintaining Impact Fee program

Parks Improvement Capital Fund will primarily be used to improve existing parks and replace maintenance equipment in an orderly manner.

3. Priority Plan

The 2010 Plan identifies several issues as critical issues that require closer attention. These issues range from the need for a fully developed community park to additional facilities in certain neighborhoods. Development of amenities and programs for the families and/or older population has also been identified as a major need. Although these issues have played a major role in development of the Framework Plan, some of them will need to be considered on a shorter term. Other issues, for a variety of reasons, will need to be considered as long term objectives. Some issues have also become priorities, as they represent opportunities which the Town will need to take advantage of on a short term basis. The issues and opportunities have been assigned weights, based on the interest of the citizens, review by the Park Department, and the level of deficiencies.

There are three different levels of priority proposed in the Plan. The High Priority projects or initiatives, (H), are projects that the Department will try to implement within the life of this Plan. These projects will be included in the five-year Action Plan. The Medium Priority projects, (M), will be addressed if funding becomes available or when high priority projects have been implemented. The Low Priority projects, (L), are projects that may not be feasible in the short term or will require other agencies' cooperation. These projects may not be implemented during the life of this Plan, unless they become feasible or cooperative efforts with other agencies' result in their implementation.

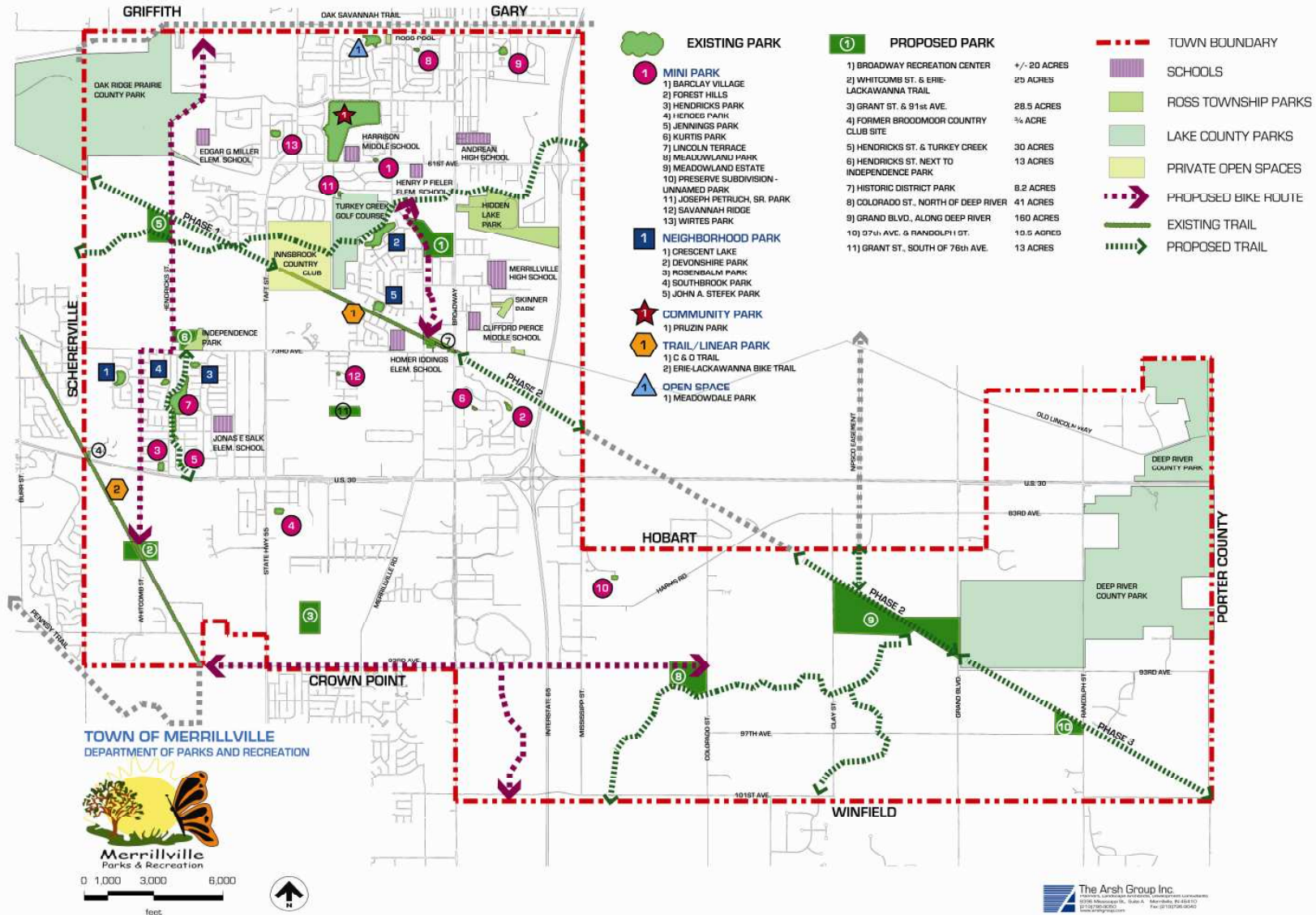
Park	Activities	Priority		
		High	Medium	Low
Barclay Village	Add Park Sign			
	Add trellis and benches			
	Install trees and shrubs on north and east side			
Crescent Lake	Construct walking trail around lake			
Devonshire	Install sign for park			
	Construct playground			
	Construct little league field			
	Construct tennis court			
	Construct picnic facilities			
	Construct restroom facilities			
	Construct walking & jogging trail			
	Install parking			
	Install shade trees			
	Repair path & bridge to island			
	Renovate island			
Erie-Lackawanna Bike Trail	Pave parking areas at 93rd Ave. (Node 3)			
	Acquire land for park site at Whitcomb			
	Develop activity node 3			
Forest Hills	Acquire land to the east			
	Construct picnic facilities			
	Expand existing basketball court			
	Replace playground equipment			
	Construct restroom facilities			
	Resurface existing parking lot			
	Construct entry road & parking			
	Construct walking trail			
	Construct softball field			
	Install shade trees			
	Improve landscaping along entry paths			
Hendricks Park	Construct Farmers Market - shelter/bandstand			
	Install turf & hardscape			
	Install landscaping (add trees on north and east sides of park)			
	Construct parallel parking along western edge			

Park	Activities	Priority		
		High	Medium	Low
Heroes Park	Continue maintenance of park			
Jennings Park	Regrade to improve drainage system at entry . Install rain garden, east edge			
	Construct trail along waterway connecting Jennings/Lincoln Terrace/Rosenbalm			
Kurtis Park	Install picnic shelter			
Lincoln Terrace	Complete masterplan for expanded park			
	Acquire land to the north, approx. 14.5 acrs			
	Connect 76th Ln. to Jennings to create a entrance to the park			
	Construct softball field			
	Construct soccer/field sports area			
	Construct nature trail system			
	Install play equipment			
	Relocate existing tot lot equipment			
	Construct picnic facilities			
	Install park signs			
Meadowdale	Preserve North side of Park as natural area			
Meadowland	Construct picnic facilities			
	Install play equipment			
	Construct pond/water feature			
	Construct walking path			
	Install landscaping			
	Install park signs			
	Install fence along 54th Street			
Meadowland Estate	Construct picnic shelter			
	Construct ballfield			
	Install playground			
	Construct entry plaza & arbor			
	Construct walking path			
	Construct tennis court			
Joseph Petruch, Sr. Park	Install sign			
	Landscape entry area			
	Clear brush, trim trees			
	Construct shelter			
	Construct walking trail			

Park	Activities	Priority		
		High	Medium	Low
Pruzin Park	Construct new parking lot with rain garden			
	Construct play area			
	Construct splash pad			
	Construct ballfields			
	Construct soccer field			
	Construct restroom & concession facilities for practice fields			
	Install drinking fountain			
Rosenbalm Park	Renovate baseball field			
	Install landscaping			
	Construct trail along waterway			
Savannah Ridge	Install shade trees			
Southbrook Park	Construct fitness trail among the various parcels			
	Construct tennis court on East parcel			
	Install landscaping			
John A. Stefek Park	Repair & renovate play fields			
Wirtes Park	Replace playground equipment			
	Relocate picnic shelter			
	Improve drainage problem to assist with stormwater management enhancement			
Land Acquisition	Site #1: Broadway Recreation Center			
	Site #2: Whitcomb St. & Erie Lackawanna Trail			
	Site #3: Grant St. & 91st Ave.			
	Site #4: Former Broadmoor Country Club Site			
	Site #5: Hendricks St. & Turkey Creek			
	Site #6: Hendricks St., next to Independence Park			
	Site #7: Historic District Park			
	Site #8: Colorado St., north of Deep River			
	Site #9 Grand Blvd., along Deep River			
	Site #10: 97th Ave. & Randolph St.			
	Site #11: Grant St., south of 76th Ave.			
Trail Development	C&O Trail			
	Turkey Creek			
	Deep River			
	Creek bordering Rosenbalm, Lincoln Terrace, & Jennings Park			
	Hendricks/Whitcomb Bike Route			
	93rd Ave. Bike Route			
	Madison St. Bike Route			

Parks & Recreation Master Plan 2010 - 2014

Merrillville, Indiana



4. Action Plan

The Action Plan is an instrument which will guide and direct the activities of the Parks Department for the next five years. The activities included in the Action Plan are priority items which were determined to be highly desirable or needed items to meet the overall objectives of the Master Plan. The Action Plan is organized according

to year, facility, planned improvement, estimated budget, and potential funding sources. The funding source is expected to be fluent, as budgetary policies of the Town may change over time. The costs identified on the Plan are only estimates and should be used for budgeting purposes only. Actual costs may vary as projects are further developed and defined.

2010			
Facility	Action Item	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Devonshire Park	Construct picnic facilities	\$ 10,000	Grant + Local
	Install shade trees	\$ 3,000	Local
Jennings Park	Regrade to improve drainage system at entry. Install rain garden, east edge	\$ 15,000	Grant + Local
Pruzin Park	Construct new parking lot with rain garden	\$ 40,000	Grant + Local
	Construct play area	\$ 25,000	Local
Rosenbalm Park	Renovate baseball field	\$ 15,000	Local
John A. Stefek Park	Repair & renovate play fields	\$ 15,000	Local
Wirtes Park	Improve drainage problem to assist with stormwater management enhancement	\$ 20,000	Grant + Local
LOCAL		\$ 83,000	
GRANT		\$ 60,000	
PUBLIC WORKS		\$ -	
SUBTOTAL		\$ 143,000	

2011			
Facility	Action Item	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Barclay Village	Add Park Sign	\$ 1,500	Local
	Add trellis and benches	\$ 3,000	Grant + Local
	Install trees and shrubs on north and east side	\$ 1,000	Grant + Local
Devonshire Park	Install sign for park	\$ 1,500	Grant + Local
	Construct playground	\$ 20,000	Grant + Local
	Construct little league field	\$ 75,000	Grant + Local
	Construct tennis court	\$ 30,000	Grant + Local
	Construct restroom facilities	\$ 35,000	Grant + Local
	Construct walking & jogging trail	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
	Install landscaping	\$ 20,000	Grant + Local
	Install parking	\$ 20,000	Local
Hendricks Park	Install turf & hardscape	\$ 82,000	Grant + Local
	Install landscaping (add trees on north and east sides of park)	\$ 3,000	Grant + Local
	Construct parallel parking along western edge	\$ 15,000	Local
Pruzin Park	Construct play area	\$ 30,000	Grant + Local
	Construct splash pad	\$ 45,000	Grant + Local
	Construct ballfields	\$ 60,000	Grant + Local
	Construct soccer field	\$ 20,000	Grant + Local
LOCAL		\$ 101,500	
GRANT		\$ 370,500	
FEES. PUBLIC WORKS		\$ 15,000	
SUBTOTAL		\$ 487,000	

2012			
Facility	Action Item	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Erie-Lackawanna Bike Trail	Pave parking areas at 93rd Ave. (Node 3)	\$ 52,000	Local
	Develop activity node 3	\$ 50,000	Grant + Local
Meadowland Park	Construct picnic facilities	\$ 10,000	Grant + Local
	Install play equipment	\$ 20,000	Grant + Local
	Construct pond/water feature	\$ 60,000	Grant + Local
	Construct walking path	\$ 75,000	Grant + Local
	Install landscaping	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
	Install park signs	\$ 3,500	Grant + Local
Trail Development	Turkey Creek	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
	Deep River	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
	Creek bordering Rosenbalm, Lincoln Terrace, & Jennings Park	\$ 80,000	Grant + Local
	Northern Regional Bike Route	\$ 28,000	Grant + Local
	Hendricks/Whitcomb Bike Route	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
	93rd Ave. Bike Route	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
	Madison St. Bike Route	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
LOCAL		\$ 155,000	
GRANT		\$ 373,500	
FEES		\$ -	
SUBTOTAL		\$ 528,500	

2013			
Facility	Action Item	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Forest Hills Park	Construct picnic facilities	\$ 10,000	Local
	Replace playground equipment	\$ 25,000	Local
	Resurface existing parking lot	\$ 10,000	Local
	Construct entry road & parking	\$ 100,000	Grant + Local
	Construct walking trail	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
	Construct softball field	\$ 75,000	Grant + Local
	Install shade trees	\$ 22,000	Grant + Local
	Improve landscaping along entry paths	\$ 10,000	Grant + Local
Jennings Park	Construct trail along waterway connecting Jennings/Lincoln Terrace/Rosenbalm	\$ 80,000	Grant + Local
Kurtis Park	Install picnic shelter	\$ 5,000	Grant + Local
Lincoln Terrace	Construct nature trail system	\$ 80,000	Grant + Local
Meadowland Park	Install fence along 54th Street	\$ 15,000	Local
Meadowland Estate Park	Construct picnic shelter	\$ 5,000	Local
	Construct ballfield	\$ 45,000	Grant + Local
	Install playground	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
	Construct entry plaza & arbor	\$ 25,000	Grant + Local
	Construct walking path	\$ 60,000	Grant + Local
	Construct tennis court	\$ 30,000	Grant + Local
Joseph Petruch, Sr. Park	Install sign	\$ 1,500	Local
	Landscape entry area	\$ 15,000	Local
	Clear brush, trim trees	\$ 25,000	Local
	Construct shelter	\$ 20,000	Grant + Local
	Construct walking trail	\$ 30,000	Grant + Local
Rosenbalm Park	Install landscaping	\$ 15,000	Grant + Local
	Construct trail along waterway	\$ 30,000	Grant + Local
Savannah Ridge Park	Install shade trees	\$ 15,000	Grant + Local
	Construct trail along waterway	\$ 30,000	Grant + Local
Southbrook Park	Construct fitness trail among the various parcels	\$ 30,000	Grant + Local
	Construct tennis court on East parcel	\$ 30,000	Grant + Local
	Install landscaping	\$ 18,000	Grant + Local
FEES		\$ 362,500	
GRANTS		\$ 544,000	
PUBLIC WORKS		\$ -	
SUBTOTAL		\$906,500	

2014			
Facility	Action Item	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Forest Hills	Construct restroom facilities	\$ 30,000	Grant + Local
Lincoln Terrace	Complete masterplan for expanded park	\$ 18,000	Grant + Local
	Connect 76th Ln. to Jennings to create a entrance to the park	\$ 15,000	Grant + Local
	Construct softball field	\$ 75,000	Grant + Local
	Construct soccer/ field sports area	\$ 100,000	Grant + Local
	Install play equipment	\$ 20,000	Grant + Local
	Relocate existing tot lot equipment	\$ 2,500	Local
	Construct picnic facilities	\$ 60,000	Local
	Install park signs	\$ 15,000	Local
Land Acquisition	Site #1: Broadway Recreation Center	\$ 500,000	Grant + Local
	Site #2: Whitcomb St. & Erie Lackawanna Trail	\$ 50,000	Grant + Local
	Site #4: Former Broadmoor Country Club Site	\$ 100,000	Grant + Local
	Site #8: Colorado St., north of Deep River	\$ 50,000	Grant + Local
	Site #9 Grand Blvd., along Deep River	\$ 50,000	Grant + Local
	LOCAL	\$ 305,500	
	GRANTS	\$ 780,000	
	FEES, PUBLIC WORKS	\$ -	
	SUBTOTAL	\$ 1,085,500	
	LOCAL	\$ 1,008,000	
	GRANT	\$ 2,144,500	
	FEES, OTHERS	\$ 15,000	
	TOTAL	\$ 3,167,500	

5. Vehicle & Equipment Maintenance

The Department of Parks and Recreation has limited number of the equipment and facility for maintenance. The Department often relies on other Departments or volunteer agencies to maintain its facilities. All maintenance was done by two Maintenance/Custodial staff in 2009.

Equipment replacement and maintenance is proposed as a capital item in the Plan. The set aside program will allow for an orderly replacement and to ensure that existing vehicles and equipments can be regularly maintained. A Vehicle and Equipment maintenance and replacement program is strongly recommended. The life cycle of vehicles and equipment purchased by the Department should be considered in budgeting on an annual basis. Table 20 in Chapter 3 presents the projected replacement needs for equipment and vehicles for the Parks Department.

6. Funding Sources

Funding for Action Plan projects and programs will be primarily dependent upon local revenue, grants, bonds, special appropriations, and cost sharing through strategic partnerships. Included in the plan is the establishment of a Community Park Foundation. This entity, once set up, could also seek funding and raise funds for many projects. The Park Department or the town can also seek contributions or donations from residents, businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, or philanthropists. Furthermore, the town has been fairly successful in partnering with other organizations. The town can cultivate these relationships on a broader scale and raise more in-kind dollars to develop park facilities. Potential sources of funding for the Action Plan items include:

1. *General Revenue*

The Town of Merrillville can utilize a variety of funding sources from within the Town's budget. These resources are appropriated by the Town Council on an annual basis. The Departments should pursue funds as necessary to meet the needs.

2. *Bonds*

The Town has traditionally issued a large bond on a 3-5 year basis. These bond issues have become the main source for major capital improvements in the Town. The Town may consider issuance of such bond for park facilities.

3. *Special Bond Issue*

The Town has, in the past, issued a special bond to cover major facility construction. The proposed recreation center is a prime candidate to receive and benefit from a special bond.

4. *Private Donors/Organizations*

The Department of Parks and Recreation must continue to seek out private donations of land, funds, and amenities to aid in the maintenance and improvement of the park system. In addition, local organizations can become an integral part of the park system by organizing fundraisers, park maintenance outings, or by helping sponsor new park features.

5. *Grants*

Several grants are available from the State of Indiana and the Federal Government. The Town of Merrillville should seek these grants on a regular basis. Some private organizations also provide grants for parks and recreation purposes. Most parks and recreation grants are highly

competitive and require the receiving agency to provide matching funds to prove that they are capable of undertaking the project. Listed below are some of the potential grants that are available to projects identified in this report. The matching requirements for these grants are identified in the parenthesis.

- **Hometown Indiana (50/50)**

Hometown Indiana is a state grants program that provides matching grants for local park and recreation projects, community forestry programs and historic preservation projects. (This program is not currently funded by the State)

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund (50/50)**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal grant program that is administered at both federal and state levels. The program provides assistance for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation/conservation areas and facilities. The National Park Service administers the federal portion, while the Indiana Department of Natural Resources administers the state portion of the grants.

- **Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (80/20)**

The Transportation Enhancement category of the federal transportation authorization bill provides grants funding for alternative transportation modes, bike/pedestrian trails, and community design. These grants must be coordinated through the transportation improvement program process of the metropolitan planning organization (NIRPC).

- **Recreational Trails Program (80/20)**

The Recreational Trails Program is a federally-funded, state administered (Indiana DNR) grant program which is aimed at developing or maintaining motorized or non-motorized recreational trails. A minimum of 30% of the overall grant program must be for motorized use, 30% is for non-motorized use, and the remainder is discretionary funds. The minimum grant amount is \$10,000 with a maximum award of \$150,000.

- **Indiana Waters Program (75/25)**

Indiana Water grants can be used by local park boards to acquire, develop, or renovate fishing and boating access facilities.

- **Indiana Coastal Grants Program (50/50)**

The Indiana Coastal Grants Program awards monies to projects that protect and restore natural, cultural, and historic resources in Indiana's Lake Michigan coastal region. Natural area restoration, preservation, and management projects are deemed high priority issues and, therefore, receive the highest consideration in awarding grants. However, cultural & historical restoration, preservation, and management projects are also eligible under this grant, as well as improvements to trails, public access connections, and habitat corridors.

- **Indiana Lake and River Enhancement Program (75/25)**

The Indiana Lake and River Enhancement Program was created to help ensure the viability of Indiana's publicly accessible lakes, streams, and reservoirs. The program provides funding for such projects as wetland construction, shoreline/stream bank stabilization, watershed treatment projects, dredging, and various diagnostic & feasibility studies. The program does not provide monies for lake construction,

private lake enhancement, or shoreline improvements for recreational purposes.

- **Shooting Range Program**

The DNR's Shooting Range Grant Program offers assistance to all units of government, and not-for-profit agencies, for the development of rifle, handgun, shotgun, and archery facilities available to the public. The intent of this program is to train the public, hunter education, and to provide additional safe places for target practice.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Chapter Six

CHAPTER SIX – CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

December 17, 2009 - 6:00 P.M.

Public Meeting

1. Attendees

D. Lance Huish, Parks Committee Chairman (Councilman-Ward 3)

Tom Goralczyk, (Councilman-Ward 4)

Terri Monroe Weems, Park and Recreation Director

Taghi Arshami, The Arsh Group

Carla McVea, The Arsh Group

Chas Rielly, *The Times*

Karen Caffarini, *Post-Tribune*

2. Minutes of Meeting

The meeting started with the introduction and welcome remarks made by Ms. Terri Weems, Parks and Recreation director. After remarks, Ms Weems explained that the new Plan represents an update of the previous Master Plan and is not a new study. For cost savings purposes, Ms. Weems requested an update to the previous Master Plan report in lieu of a new study and/or full Plan.

Ms. Weems chaired the meeting and continued to explain the process along with components of the update. After the brief overview, Ms. Weems asked Mr. Arshami of The Arsh Group if he had any additional comments. Mr. Arshami had no comments at this point in the meeting. Subsequently, Ms. Weems opened the meeting for questions and comments.

No residents were present at the meeting. Park Chair Huish and Councilman Goralczyk Committee members had several questions in

reference to individual park conditions. Questions that were raised per Park are as follows:

Rosenbalm

Tom Goralczyk

- Some park plans continue to indicate that conditions in the parks are good, when in fact some are in poor condition. Ms. Weems explained that the actual park plans were not evaluated or updated in this plan. This document represents an update as opposed to a new plan. Because the plan is an update and not a new plan, revisions to individual park plans were omitted in order to save costs.
- Recommendation was made to decommission baseball fields. The area where the baseball field was located should be used to improve stormwater runoff by utilizing the MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) program funds. The MS4 Program is a federally mandated program to improve water quality and is administered through local municipalities.

Mr. Goralczyk suggested a pond and/or rain garden. Another comment made was for a private organization (IHCD) to expand their operations to include the purchase of land/area where the baseball diamond/pond is located.

Devonshire

D. Lance Huish

- Recommendation was made to sell the island to residents for a garden.

Lincoln Terrace

Tom Goralczyk

- Tom stated that the 14.5 acres was a part of the Burkes study. Recommendation was made to acquire the property through stormwater management. Comments were made that the County has some drainage and erosion problems in that area.

Hendricks

D. Lance Huish

Tom Goralczyk

- Recommendation was made to sell park to commercial buyer as opposed to a residential buyer.

Stefek

D. Lance Huish

Tom Goralczyk

- Recommendation was made to remove ball fields, concrete wall and fence. The ball fields could be removed in-house by the Public Works department. Soccer field could be used to replace ball fields.

Southbrook

Tom Goralczyk

- Recommendation was made to remove baseball diamond and subdivide lots to be sold. Estimated number of lots is 7. The wetland areas can be utilized as stormwater retention areas and rain gardens.

Crescent Lake

Tom Goralczyk

D. Lance Huish

Terri Monroe Weems

- The participants agreed to future walk/jog trail upon approval of the residents.

Jennings

D. Lance Huish

- Mr. Huish recommended selling the property or using the area as a stormwater retention area and rain gardens. Additional comments were made regarding the Park's accessibility.

Erie Lackawanna

Tom Goralczyk

- Mr. Goralczyk requested that the trail at Activity Node 1 have the transitions from the trail to the parking lot paved. This area is currently a two foot section of gravel.

Ms. Weems thanked the attendees and informed them that the final plan is required to be submitted by January 15, 2010. Any additional comments should be submitted as soon as possible but not later than December 22, 2009. All resolutions and documents will be signed at the council meeting for inclusion in the final of the master plan.

The Public Meeting adjourned about 7:05 p.m.

Additional Comments

- One comment was made the day after the meeting and came from Joe Shudick through Lance Huish inquiring about a dog park.